

A
DISSERTATION,
IN
ANSWER
TO A
Blasphemous LETTER
Concerning the
FALL of MAN,
AND THE
Coming of CHRIST.

καὶ ὁμολογμένως μέγα ἐστὶ τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας
μυστήριον. Θεὸς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί,

1 Tim. iii. 16.

L O N D O N:

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The AUTHOR's

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Concerning the

Letter here Consider'd,

With the Contents of it.



I Had a Letter subscribed S. T. and dated *June 3th 1722.* (as from *Battons Coffee-House*) brought me by an unknown Person, to appearance a Servant, who could, or at least did, give no Account from whom it came, only said he met with it: And so went away (I being not just then at leisure) before I perused it. But when I had,

(it may be judg'd with what Surprize) and found it proceeded throughout upon Mistakes; I determin'd, for Reasons in the following Preface, to make my Answer to it publick. Tho' I think it by no means advisable to set forth the Letter it self entire; by reason of some very shocking and even Blasphemous expressions in it. Wherefore I shall here digest the whole substance of it into Particulars, keeping generally to the very Words: Or at least giving whatever of Argument there is in it, its full force. Which if he that writ it, finds I have not, he knows how to do himself right.

He begins with letting me know, that he writes it on account of something he had heard me saying, and so proceeds to Object.

I. *That, whereas the Clergy are very copious in setting forth the Mercy of God, in healing Mankind by Jesus Christ; they do not so much as pretend, there was any Reason for his permitting the Disease, by letting loose the Devil, such a subtil Spirit, to delude the Woman, and thereby subjecting the fate of Mankind to that trifling Sex, giddy and unthinking, even as it came out of the hand of its Creator.*

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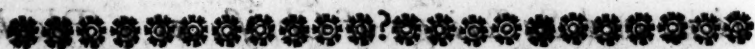
II. That it's certain there ought to have been an invincible Reason for his suffering a Temptation to take effect, which brought on a Ruin, not to be repaired but at so great Expence. And more especially, since from that so monstrously Tragical Event, it's allowed that infinite Mischief has followed; even the remediless Damnation of hundreds of Millions in the Heathen World, before the Remedy took Effect; and thenceforward, as to all not Baptized.

III. That, the speaking of the Incarnation, and Sufferings of Christ, as a Plank thrown out, or the best that could be done upon such an universal wreck, seems Dishonourable to God; because it looks as if the Devil had crept in unawares to do this Mischief, and so put God under a necessity, in tenderneſs to Mankind, to Sacrifice his only begotten Son for their Releif. Whereas it's certain his Omniscience could have fore-seen, and Omnipotence steer'd all Events, so as to have prevented the Plunge here supposed. And tho' he did not destroy the Devil immediately upon his Rebellion; yet undoubtedly he has always kept a strict curb upon him.

IV. That

IV. *That he, and many Thousands more, think it would have been infinitely better, since all the Mischief mention'd would have been prevented, had Mankind been created in such perfection, as to be uncáparable of Sin.*

In the Close, he desires me to consider him as a good Christian, except that he cannot readily get over these Matters. And seems to speak doubtingly whether any of the Clergy can help him out.



ERRATA.

Page 4. line 18. read *think to find*. p. 29. l. 3. r. *only as being*. p. 35. note. r. *Rom. i. p. 59. l. 17. dele*. p. 61. l. 15. r. *with Thunder*. p. 94. l. 10. r. *shall*. p. 96. l. penult, r. *Sweets*. p. 105. l. 5. r. *Despise*.

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THE
PREFACE.



S to any Words of mine which this Gentleman here pretends to take bold of, I can only remember in general, that whenever I have Convers'd with Persons of his Complexion, which has sometimes hap-pen'd in Places of Publick Resort, I have been ready, as occasion offered to Assert our most Holy Faith. Which therefore being thus Blasphemously insult-ed, I have address'd my self (with re-gard to what he points at) to open and digest in a way that may possibly be of Service,

Service, in relieving some under the same Delusion. And the rather; Since, as it appears evidently in this Letter; so there seems, I think, good Reason to believe in general, that these so fatal Prejudices arise from the not duely Weighing, or perhaps, Ignorance of those Particulars, which I have here endeavoured to place in such a point of view, as I hope may readily approve it self to the Reason of Mankind.

But be it otherwise; I however consider it as a Felicity, that the Subject to which these Objections have determin'd me, is what the Learned and Judicious Reader, if really a Christian (as every such undoubtedly is) must wish I had been equal to; and instead of Censuring, endeavour to help me out.

In the interim I shall only add, with reference to the Person for whose Information

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mation I have here Written: That since his Declaration, in the close of his Letter (notwithstanding some Obnoxious Expressions in it) directs me in Charity to conclude him in the Catholick Faith; (except as to what he objects to) and particularly with regard to the Person of Christ, and the Necessity and Merit of his Satisfaction; I shall accordingly break ground, in order to take in those Difficulties for him, he is yet to Conquer. And I perswade my self, if he has but Patience and Application, as no doubt he has Capacity, to consider the Divine Dispensation, with respect to the fall of Adam, it will appear, in what is here open'd, to have been the result, as well of infinite Wisdom, as Goodness, and every way Worthy of God: There being, I conceive, evident, and abundantly sufficient Reasons why he might please to have, from Eternity, Decreed to permit it, as Determined also to execute

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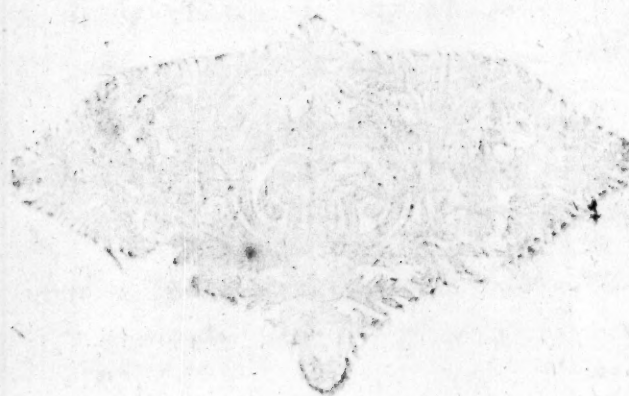
cute a Scheme in consequence of it, highly for the Advancement of his Honour, in the Preservation of Mankind, and great increase of their Happiness, and even probably, that also of the Superiour Rational Creation. Which if made appear, all he has Objected will fall to nothing. As therefore I have great hopes of setting him right; so I here add, that should it prove my Happiness to be Instrumental in it; or as to any other, though but a Single Person, in the same Errour; it would make me easy under whatever ill Treatment I might possibly meet with from Irreclaimable Scepticks. Though I could not, in that Case, forbear considering it as such, and even highly Injurious; it being so evidently my Design to do what little good I can without incensing any. For which Reason, it is in as tender and inoffensive a way as may be, that I have here proceeded, in the close, to consider the chief of those, who

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in any respect oppose the Doctrines of Christianity: Except, I confess, as to the Clergy of the Church of Rome; with regard to whom, I doubt, scarce any Measures can well be observed, (not because they observe none with us, for we have not so learned Christ, but) as Zealously professing to believe, and embrace all the great Articles of the Faith; and yet prostituting the whole to Secular Ends. Which I take to be a more stinging Affront to our most Holy Religion, than all that ever Jew or Heathen amongst the Ancients, or Deist in any succeeding Age hitherto, has objected to Dishonour it.



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CHAP. I.

Of the Interests of Mankind, as affected by what immediately follow'd upon the *Sin of Adam.*

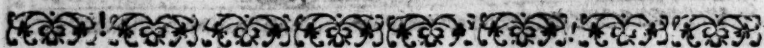
All that this Objector is stagger'd at, may be very well accounted for. The Fall of Adam much for the Advantage of Mankind, considering the Circumstances they were in. By what followed upon it, they were made far more secure from being miserable than if he had not sinned: If he had not fallen, and Christ been thereupon immediately promised, every Sin committed by any of his Posterity, would have been inexorably punished. In consequence of our

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Lord's

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CHAP. III.

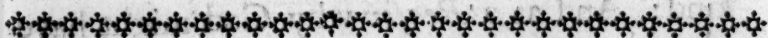
What follow'd upon the *Fall of Adam*, farther consider'd, as affecting the Interests of Mankind: And as a *Reason* why God might have pleas'd to permit it.

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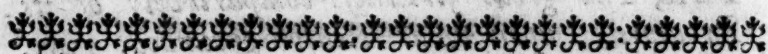
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 him. Where, of the Reason of his using the
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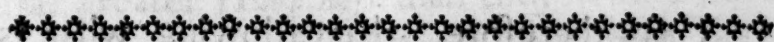
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that it would be but to little Purpose to
open the Matter A
manner, of specifying those Reasons, which
have been brought in by those who are
view of Providence to be above their
reach, and esteem it a high Presumption
to call in Question the Wisdom of
A N S W E R, &c.



CHAP. I

*Of the Interests of Mankind, as
affected by what immediately fol-
low'd upon the Sin of Adam.*



T'S certain, as to the first and
chief Exception before us in
this Letter, though it were
not possible for Man to point
out any Reason of God's permitting that
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first Transgression; yet ought not his *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, to be arraigned at our Tribunal, or subjected to our Censure.

NOTWITHSTANDING I am well apprized that it would be but to little Purpose to open the *Matters* it treats of, in such a manner, or specify those *Reasons*, which have hitherto satisfied all modest Enquirers, who are content to allow some *Dispensations* of Providence to be above their reach, and esteem it an high Presumption, to call their *Creator* to a strict Account of his *Actions*.

I say therefore, that allowing what is most certain, (and as the writer of this Letter seems to intimate) that to the Divine *Omniscience* all Events were *present* from Eternity; there is infinite Reason, why every *thing*, which he boggles, and is so much staggered at, should have come to pass *just* as it did. Nay, that every Link of that intricate mysterious *Chain*, has upon it the impressed Characters of divine *Wisdom*.

And

AND First,—As to the *Fall* of Man, which he laments as so fatally mischievous in its consequences; he will see no great Reason to *repine* at it; if it be made appear, that it was the *happiest Event*, and most for the Advantage of Mankind, considering the *Circumstances* they were in, that could possibly have come to pass; in that, by what followed upon it, they were thence forward placed in a *State* far more *secure* from being remediless miserable: And made capable of attaining far greater *Happiness* than they would have been, had our first Parents continued *Innocent*.

AND first, They were by what followed upon it, put into a *State* far more *secure* from being remedilessly miserable. Because, whereas the divine *Justice* took such fast hold of the very *first Sin* of Adam, that the Punishment threatned followed irreversibly upon it; the *Case* would have been the same with every Individual of his Posterity, upon the *first* wilful *Transgression*

of any kind, tho' he himself had continued Innocent. (a)

(a) I am not in any doubt as to this Assertion, on Account of St. *Austin's* (and his Followers) *Doctrin*, which I do not find to have been ever thought of before his time in the *Primitive*, or received afterwards in the *Greek Church*. For the setting up *Adam* as the representative Head of Mankind, and supposing God to have made a *Covenant* with him as such, and decreed, that their Fate, as to eternal *Happiness* or *Misery*, should turn upon his Behaviour; and that consequently they are all lost and damn'd by the presum'd imputation of his Sin, such only excepted who are saved by an *absolute Decree of Election*: This, I say is a *Matter* of such infinite Consequence, that certainly nothing less than a very positive and express Declaration in *Scripture*, could be ground sufficient for asserting it. And that one would think in the History of the *Creation* it self, and several other Places, the whole *Oecomy* of Religion in both *Testaments*, as to God's federal Dealings with Mankind, being so nearly affected by it. Wherefore it seems much too violent a Strain, to draw such an important *Point of Doctrin*, and which grates so evidently upon the *Justice* and *Goodness*, and even *Truth* of God, as a remote and obscure Consequence from St. *Paul's* Argument. *Rom. v.* which is the chief, if not only *Scripture* I find alleged to support it. For supposing it necessary, that the Opposition in his Reasoning there, between *Adam* and *Christ*, should be understood as running on entire and parallel throughout, which need not be granted: Yet it must be observed, that whereas its said, *v. 19.* that *as by the Disobedience of one many were made Sinners; so by the Obedience of one, shall many be made righteous*: The Apostle plainly argues from a *barely suppos'd Notion* of our being made Sinners through *Adam*, to prove our being justified by *Christ*, which would seem as it were, a *Petio Principii* as to us, who have no revelation of any such *Matter*, Tho' just Reasoning, with regard to the *Jewish Converts*, to whom he writes, who must have had

think to find

So that considering the *Frame* of human *Nature*, the Subtilty of *Satan*, the State of the World, with the numberless ensnaring Temptations it is crowded with, and the stinging, and almost irresistible Curiosity of

had some such received *Opinion* among them, which he there appeals to. In like manner as, we see sometimes in other Places; particularly to the *Hebrews*, he forms his Schemes of Argument, referring himself to their received Opinions, and the Rites and Ceremonies of their Law. So that, upon the whole, it seems far from evident, that the *Apostle* designed to impose this terrible Doctrine upon our Belief as true: But only to set forth to them, and illustrate by it, in a way of *Opposition*, that great and concerning Truth, *our being justified and reconciled to God by Jesus Christ*. We most heartily therefore close with and embrace the *Conclusion*, he infers; and leave it to be considered upon what *Cabbalistical* Notion or *Traditional* Doctrine of theirs, the *Premisses* are founded. But were not this so; yet it is to be farther considered, that the Words in that 19th Verse above cited, do not necessarily import the *becoming* or *being made* really Sinners, but, agreeably to the Phrase of Scripture, may no less properly signify the being only *used* or *treated as such*: As appears evidently, to omit other Instances, from 1 Kings i. 21. (the *Heb.* and *Sept.* consulted) where Bathsheba says, she and her Son Solomon should be Offenders, not really so, (as she could have no ground to say) but *suffer* as if they were, should *Adonijah* reign. And agreeably to this *Sense* and way of *Expression*, *Adam's Posterity* may by the *Apostle* be deservedly said to be *made Sinners* by his Guilt, as very remarkably Sharers in the consequence of it; and under the *Condemnation* mentioned in the adjoining Verses: Which refers to that temporal Death (with the Fears and Pains attending it) they become subject to by that first *Transgression*.

tasting

tasting unexperienced forbidden Pleasures: Considering also that that our *Representative*, tho' he had Life and Death before his Eyes, and well knew how vast a *Stake* he set, what infinite Danger he was in, how easily he might escape it, and preserve himself in Innocence and Happiness: Yet became guilty of what nothing but Wantonness, and a very criminal Curiosity; not to say, perverse Neglect, or even Defiance of the Divine Authority, could have betrayed him into, and which was almost the only *Evil*, that in his Circumstances he could have been guilty of: Nay farther, being endowed with such bright, and vigorous *Faculties*, he could not but be clearly sensible, that however the *Matter* of the *Law* might not be very important, yet the *Authority* of God added the greatest weight to it. And that that was as much contemn'd, his *Goodness* slighted, his *Truth* and Faithfulness question'd, and his *Majesty* affronted in it, as it would in a *Point* of the highest moment: These Things, I say, considered, there seems infinite Reason to fear, that very few, if any of his numerous Descendents, of the same

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Temper and Complexion (Incentives to Evil, by the great Increase of the Inhabitants of the Earth, almost infinitely multiplying upon them) would have preserved such an entire spotless Innocence, as not some time or other to have fallen into *Sin*; the Consequence of which, must have been irretrievable *Misery*; supposing them to have gone on in their successive Generations, and continued in the same *Circumstances* with regard to God, in which *Adam* stood at the time of his *Sin*, without having any thing *covenanted* in their behalf, which might alter the *Course* of his proceeding with Sinners. Because the same *Reason* which concluded him under an unpardonable *Guilt*, must, in that Case, have no less concluded them.

FOR since God acts according to his *Nature*, from which its impossible for him to vary in any respect, infinite *Justice* as an essential Attribute of it, cannot be subject, as in the Hands of earthly Sovereigns, to take Place, or be superseded in an Arbitrary way: But exerts it self *necessarily*, and with inflexible Steadiness, in Proportion

on to the Demerit of the Offender; without regard to any other Considerations, but what result from that essential *Purity* and *Rectitude*, which riseth naturally against Evil, with implacable Hatred; in concurrence also with his infinite *Wisdom*, as universal *Sovereign*, which dictates without relerve the Punishment of Sin. And this it does, Notwithstanding any supposed intervention of Repentance, which therefore is said by (a) *St. Peter*, to be given by *Jesus Christ*, not as to the *Act*, which seems natural enough to a Sinner, under the Anguish of Punishment; but as to the blessed Effect of it, *the Remission of Sin*.

FOR tho' to repent, is the best thing a Criminal can do, yet it, of it self, changes not the Nature of the Sin, so as to render it less evil, or less liable to *Justice*, if not otherwise appeased.

UPON this Foot it is, that the Rebel-Angels chained down by the Divine *Justice*, stand irreversibly degraded and condemned; also the *Sin* of our first Parents, as I just

(a) *Acts* v. 31.

now observed, was inexorably pursued with the threatened Death, notwithstanding no doubt, they very heartily *repented*, as soon as astonished at that Melancholy dejecting *Change* which I conceive happen'd to their Bodies immediately upon the Commission of it, their Perception of which is express'd in the *Text* by a Sense of *Nakedness* which made them flie to conceal themselves.

GOD acts upon Principles of Infinite All-comprehending *Reason* and *Wisdom*; without any the least Intervention or Tincture of *Passion*. And therefore it's the highest, and indeed a blasphemous Absurdity to suppose it possible, that there should be any clashing Inconsistence, or Contrariety among his *Attributes*, (as is visible in Mankind, whose *Passions* thwart and make War upon one another) and the rather because an entire *Harmony* in the Divine *Nature* is essential to the Idea of infinite *Perfection*: But such there could not be, should *Mercy* interpose when *Justice* pe-

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remptorily insists and makes Demand of Judgment.

AND therefore that uninterrupted Harmony being preserved, the first Act of God's Mercy, as far we can conceive, must have been the entering on a Method of making full Satisfaction to his Justice; in behalf of Mankind, by an infinitely expiatory Sacrifice, substituted and offered to it.

FOR our Blessed Lord having, upon the Fall of Man, voluntarily stipulated, and engaged himself to take human Nature upon him, in the Fulness of Time, and to suffer Death in it for their Redemption; and the Father accepting that Stipulation, under certain Terms and Conditions specified; the divine Justice, as a Creditor, upon sufficient Security given, made no farther Claim upon any Sinners within the Conditions of that Acceptance. So that room was left for the Father, without Check from that inflexible Attribute, to proceed thence forward upon that Engagement, as a certain Fund of Mercy and Pardon; Whence issued that gracious Promise, Gen. iii. 15, opening a
Foun-

CH. I. *in Answer, &c.* 11

Fountain for all *subsequent* Pollution (as will hereafter farther appear) I say *subsequent*; for tho', as (a) St. Peter tells us, *Christ was fore-ordain'd*, or the glorious Scheme of Man's *Redemption* form'd, *before the Foundation of the World*; even by an eternal Decree of the holy Trinity: Yet it purg'd not the *first sin* of Adam, so as to render his *Repentance* accepted, and rescue him from the *Punishment* annex'd to the Commission of it: It being from the Date of that *Promise* only, that its *Effect* commenc'd, and our Interest in that inestimable Benefit. So that the *first Transgression* could not, as before, be fatal to any; nor indeed any thing less than a resolved incorrigible Impenitence.

And it is for this Reason, that our Saviour is said Rev. xiii. 8. To be the *Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World*. Namely, with regard to the Influence, and Effect, of that his *Sacrifice*, as having had its Force, and *Virtue*, from that Time; which were it necessary, might be confirm-

(a) 1 Ep. i. 20.

ed from *Acts* xv. 11 where St. Peter affirms, that their Fathers (*viz.* the *Patriarchs*, and holy Men, under the Law) were saved by the *Grace of Christ*; and also from St. Paul's speaking, *Gal.* iii. 15. of the *Covenant confirmed* before by God to *Abraham* in *Christ*; where the import of the Word *προκεκυρωμένον* points plainly at some *Covenant-Act*, to the same Effect before his Time, which could be no other than *that Specified* above.

And to make the retrospect Influence, and *Virtue* of that *Sacrifice* yet more evident, we have the Testimony of the Author to the *Hebrews* ix. 15. That by means of *Christ's Death*, there was *Redemption for the Transgressions that were under the first Testament*; so that it is evident from whence issued all thole Acts of *Mercy and Pardon*, and the consequent Praises, and Celebrations of the *Divine Goodness*, to be found in the Law and Prophets. And if it had this *Virtue* all along under the *Law*, no doubt, by a Parity of Reason also under the *Patriarchs*, even up to the Commencement of the *Covenant* it self.

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AND that none might doubt of it, we find a very early and signal *Instance* in *Cain*, the first Born of Human Race; whose *Sin* was undoubtedly, in its own Nature, far greater, and more hainous, than that of *Adam*; and the Judgment past upon him was, that he shou'd be a *Fugitive and Vagabond* in the Earth. And it was very probably added (as we may judge by *Cain's* Answer) That it shou'd be in any one's Power to revenge that Murther upon Him. But upon his *Confession* and *Penitent Sense* of the greatness of his *Sin*; acknowledging (as it shou'd be render'd) that *his Guilt or Fault, was greater than what might be pardoned*. God not only set a *Mark* to secure him from Violence; but the other Part of the *Sentence* was, in all Appearance, also revers'd; for he settled himself, built a *City*, and enjoyed the Power, and Dignity of a *Patriarch* there, being the Father of those, who are said by *Moses*, to be the Sons and Daughters of *Men*; in Contradistinction to the *Line of Seth*.

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UPON the whole, as to this Particular, no more need be said to evince, that the Obedience of the *Patriarchs*, and Holy Men among the chosen People, was accepted and their *Sins pardoned* by the Virtue and Merit of Christ's Death.

CHAP. II.

That the fall of Adam did not include the Heathen under a Necessity of Damnation.

WE have consider'd the Consequence of what came to pass upon that first Transgression, with regard to the *Patriarchs* and chosen People.

AND as to the *State* of the *Heathen*, it's not to be given up for hopeless, as tho' the *Fall of Adam* included them universally under a *Necessity of Damnation*, as this *Letter* groundlessly asserts. Since those who lived up to the best Direction of natural *Light*, however clouded and obscur'd, we need not doubt were graciously *Accepted*;

ed; and that they who were faithfull in their *Little*, how little soever, if the whole they had receiv'd, were *made Rulers over much*.

FOR tho' we learn from (a) St. Peter, that *there is none other Name under Heaven, given among Men whereby we must be saved*, but only the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that *there is not Salvation in any other*, yet it does not follow, that actual Faith in Him is in all Cases, even with Regard to those that are *capable*, a necessary Qualification, for the applying the Merit of it: Since we see the *Apostles* themselves knew nothing of his Dying for Sinners till after his Resurrection: Nor does it appear, that the *Patriarchs* and their Posterity, the chosen People were apprized of it.

There was indeed a gradual Revelation made to them, by a long Succession of *Prophets*, of many Circumstances relating to his Birth and Character; particularly, that He was to be a Deliverer and Intercessor; but it was universally understood with Reference to the Temporal Pu-

(a) Acts iv. 12.

nishments of their Sins ; the Blessings of this Life (the Rewards propos'd to encourage their Obedience) guiding the Thoughts and Desires of the later *Jews*, more especially, so entirely in a secular Channel, as to make them expect his coming in the Pomp and Majesty of a mighty Conqueror, to subdue their Enemys, and to establish them in Power and Dominion.

So that, as to the *spiritual Blessings* vouchsafed by Him ; they were generally upon the same Foot with the Heathen World, equally *ignorant* ; for tho' as I just now observed, there are frequent *Declarations* of *Mercy* and *Pardon* in the Law and the Prophets ; yet those to whom they were made, knew nothing of the true Cause, or *Original* of them ; but consider'd them probably, as from a Counter-Attribute, thwarting and restraining the Divine *Justice* ; and consequently there was no Reason why their *Faith* so grounded, should have given them any Preference as to *Blessings* of that Kind.

AND therefore we may reasonably conclude, that the Heathen, having the same
Interest

Interest in that great propitiatory Sacrifice; (the Blood of which was *virtually shed* in Paradise it self) shall not be finally condemned for not *believing* in a Saviour of *whom they never heard*.

FOR God Measures the *Faults* of Men by their *Wills*: If there be no Obliquity there, they are free from *Guilt*; He only is a *Transgressor*, who does not doe what he knows, or may know (if not wanting to himself) that he ought to do; where there is *invincible* Ignorance, the Neglect of *Duty* is wholly involuntary; the *Will* having nothing to do where the *Understanding* does not first direct.

WE are told by the Apostle, Rom. ii. 11. That *there is no Respect of Persons with God: for as many as have sinn'd without Law, shall also perish without Law: and as many as have sinn'd in the Law, shall be judged by the Law*. The meaning of which I take to be, that God will judge the World by an equitable Rule, according to the means Men have had of knowing his Will; not by any such partial Regards, as too often Byass the Judgments of Mankind.

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AND since he tells us further, v. 14. That the Heathen, *who have not the Law, are a Law unto themselves; their Consciences bearing Witness, Excusing or Condemning them, as they Observe, or Transgress it.* Since also it is certain, where *Conscience rightly informed* (as that grounded upon the Law of Nature in this Case, undoubtedly is) does *excuse*, God will never *condemn*; it follows, that having no Divine written *Law* to direct their Actions, they shall be judged by the *Law*, that Nature gave them, being pardoned ratably, upon their Repentance, and Amendment of Life, by the *Intercession* of the same All-powerful Mediator: Who, as he appears throughout the Old Testament to have acted sometimes *visibly* as such (the *Angel* or *Minister* of the *Covenant*, Mal. iii. 1.) with regard to the *Patriarchs* and chosen People: So we may reasonably conclude him to have done (tho' in a less perceptible Way) as to all others; who either were not tainted with *Idollatry* or *Repenting* returned from it, and look'd up to that supream Lord and Author

thor of the World; whom the *Light of Nature* pointed out to some, and might, if duly regarded, have done to all. And that he left no Descendent of *Adam*, interested consequently in that *Covenant of Mercy*, so destitute of sufficient *Grace*, to answer the Obligations of the State he is in, as finally to perish, otherwise than by his own Neglect; a Sovereign Antidote having been provided against the Poison of Sin before any Child was born to him; and the *Promise*, then also made, which entitled his Posterity to the Benefit of it, being without Exception.

It was no doubt, by the Spirit that (a) *St. Peter* declares, with Reference to the Piety of that Religious Heathen *Cornelius*, that *God is no Respector of Persons; but in every Nation* (and we may add in every Age) *he that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness is accepted with him.*

AND this is a Truth, which if not thought already sufficiently establish'd, may possibly receive some farther Light from

(a) *Acts. x. 34.*

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the Conduct of Providence it self; and that in two Respects.

I. THAT God has pleas'd in his infinite *Wisdom* and *Goodness* to impress upon the Mind of Man in his Creation, what might be a means of qualifying him to be so *accepted*, by taking Advantage of that most gracious *Dispensation*, which was to commence upon the *Fall* of *Adam*.

SINCE, whereas an inexhaustible Fund of *Mercy* was then settled, the Notices of *natural Right* Instructed, and Encouraged him by *Repentance* and *Reformation* from Sin, to make himself capable of gaining an Interest in it; (however as yet not reveal'd to him) those being *Acts* proportion'd to that *Dispensation*, and answering the Laws to be afterwards promulged, when the *Sun* of *Righteousness* should actually arise.

AND further, whereas, that *Mercy* was purchased by Virtue of an infinitely Meritorious *Sacrifice* stipulated to be offer'd, for appeasing the Divine *Justice*: The Method of Religious Worship by *Sacrifices*, not only Eucharistical, but *Expiatory*, was re-
ceiv'd

ceiv'd generally in the Heathen World :
 A Practice founded on a very Ancient, and
 perhaps natural Notion they seem to have
 had, that God was not to be pleas'd
 barely by *Repentance*, without having his
Justice satisfied, by the *Suffering* of some o-
 ther in the Sinners stead; and that he would
 please to accept such a *vicarious Punish-*
ment.

PURSUANT to which we find them
 substituting the Lives of *Beasts* a *Redemp-*
tion for their own under Forfeiture by Sin:
 And increasing the *Expense* (and by Con-
 sequence the presum'd Merit) of their Of-
ferings in Proportion to their Sense of *Guilt*,
 or the Distress they were in, and the Ear-
 nestness of their Desire to atone and pa-
 cify their Gods; which was often rais'd to
 such Excess, as to reach the Barbarity of
humane Sacrifices, and sometimes even of
 their dearest Relations; giving, as the *Pro-*
phet expresses it, *the Fruit of their Body, for*
the Sin of their Soul.

AND this Method of *Deprecation*, or ra-
 ther attempting *Satisfaction*, by devoting the
 more precious Lives of *human Sacrifices*,
 which

which the Gentile World (conscious of the Insufficiency of *Brutal*) in extraordinary Cases, had recourse to, and placed a Confidence in, tho' grossly mis-applied as to the *Object*, and for its Inhumanity and Barbarousness highly offensive to God; yet being in its own Nature a *Typical* Representation, or *Prefigurative* of the all-sufficient *Atonement* to be made upon the *Cross*, it had this remarkable Advantage, that it naturally prepared them for a Prompt, a steady *Faith*, in that infinitely *expiatory Sacrifice*, when in the *Fullness of Time* actually offer'd, and thereupon made known to them : The general *Scheme* also of the *Doctrines* relating to it, answering in some other Particulars, the Notions and Practices receiv'd among them.

So that no doubt it must have been a very acceptable *Discovery* from the Mouths of the first Preachers of Christianity, especially the *Truth* of it being demonstratively ascertain'd by *Miracles*, that whereas, they and their Fore-fathers had, with very great Expense, and often infinite Regret, been all along offering *Idolatrous Sacrifices*, utterly Worthless and Ineffectual, as to the

Atoning

CH. 2. in Answer, &c.

25

Atoning for Sin; the only begotten *Son* of the great God, the *Creator* of the World, had now condescended in tender love to Mankind, to take *human Nature* upon him and *devote* himself after a Life of destitute Poverty, and one continued Scene of *suffering* to be made a *Sacrifice* for them: Which by Reason of the Dignity of his Person, being of such *infinite Merit*, that entirely *satisfying* the Divine *Justice* for the Sins of the whole World, has superseded the Necessity of all farther *Sacrifices* for ever.

So that *Repentance* and *Reformation* from Sin, with a Firm and lively *Faith* in the All-sufficiency of that great *Atonement*, were to be thence-forward the gracious *Terms* of Acceptance; and that by means of his *Intercession* in Heaven, as an omnipotent *Mediator* between God and Man; to be address'd to, not like those many, which from a currently receiv'd, and probably natural Notion they had, that the supreme Gods, were not to be *immediately* approach'd by Sinners; but their Supplications must be convey'd up, and presented by certain *Mediating Powers*, *Demons*, and the Souls of their *Heroes*

Heroes deified, as *Intercessors* highly favour'd in the Court of Heaven: I say not to be address'd to like those, which, for that Reason, they had heretofore servilly endeavour'd to propitiate with the most Precious and costly *Sacrifices*; but by Earnest and faithful *Prayers*, and the most acceptable *Offering* of an Holy and virtuous Conversation.

UPON the whole, as to this Point, since, in the Oeconomy of the Christian Religion, God has pleas'd, in Mercy to them, by the Substitution of an infinitely *expiatory Sacrifice*, and an *omnipotent Mediator*, abundantly to supply what they were so pressingly sensible of their want of, and with Reference to which, as well as on other Accounts our Lord is set forth by the Prophet, as *the Desire of all Nations*: And since, moreover, he has implanted in them *Notions*, in other Particulars, answering the general *Scheme* of it; as it demonstrates the Unreasonableness of *Infidelity*, and leaves it without Pretense; so it seems one *Respect*, in which he has pleas'd in his infinite *Wisdom* and *Goodness* to have prepared,

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in some Degree, and qualify'd them for Acceptance.

THE 2^d is, that he has implanted a restless *Desire of Happiness* in the Hearts of Mankind, which being naturally a Spur to *Virtue*, and Obedience; its not reasonable to suppose, that without regard to their Conduct, he should frustrate that *Desire*, by arbitrary *Decrees*.

ON the contrary, by enabling all to attain if they stand not in their own Light, he discharges the Part of a *just and faithful Creator*, who has such a paternal Regard to all his *Offspring*, as must effectually restrain him, not only from dooming any to *Misery*, for what they can't help; but even exacting an Improvement of two *Talents*, from such as have receiv'd but *one*.

CERTAINLY its most rational, as also our Duty, to acquiesce in such a *State* of this *Point*, as Quadrates best with the unerring *Justice* and boundless *Benignity* of the *Divine Nature*, and the diffusive *Blessing* of that All-powerful *Propitiation*: Since, especially we are undoubtedly assured, that tho' nothing is more visible than the vast

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Difference there is, in the *Distribution* of the Means of Grace and Salvation in the World; (a Mystery too deep for any finite Intellect to fathom;) yet when the *Judge of all the Earth* shall demand at that great Day (as once by his Prophet (a) *Ezekiel*) IS NOT MY WAY EQUAL? There will be no Complaint.

CHAP. III.

What follow'd upon the Fall of Adam, farther consider'd, as affecting the Interests of Mankind; and as a Reason why God might have pleas'd to permit it.

I HAVE endeavour'd to shew above, in Reference to the Proposition I undertook to prove, That whereas Mankind,

(a) Chap. xviii.

before

before the *Fall* stood, as it were, upon the Brink of a Precipice, where the first false Step would have plunged them into remediless *Destruction*, their *Feet* (as the Psalmist expresses it) are now set in a large Room: So that it is impossible they should fall into *Misery*, unless by an obstinate Perseverance in those Practices, that lead to it; and consequently far more secure from being irretrievably ruined, than if *Adam* himself had not sinn'd.

WHICH is the *negative* Part of the Advantage consequent upon his *Fall*, and undoubtedly a most important, and every Way a sufficient Reason (if there were no other) why God might have pleas'd to permit it; as in his infinite *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, making Way by means of it, for the conferring such an inestimable *Benefit* upon Mankind. This I say, is the *negative* Part of the *Advantage* consequent upon the *Fall*. I proceed next, to consider the *positive* Part of it; where I undertook to shew.

Secondly, That by what followed upon that first *Transgression* Mankind became capable of attaining far greater *Happiness* than

they wou'd have been, had our first Parents continued *Innocent*.

No w to open my Way for the establishing this *Truth*; it is to be consider'd as to the Nature of *Happiness* in general, that since the essential Ingredients of it, are *Pleasure* and *Perfection*; it will follow, that the *Happiness* of a rational Nature, must consist in an unrestrained, steady, and vigorous *Exercise* of its *Powers* upon *Objects* worthy of, and agreeable to it; for then its *Powers* are *perfect*, when capable of that steady, free, and vigorous *Exercise* they were framed for; and they are then in the Raptures of *Pleasure*, when actually so *exercised*, upon such noble and suitable *Objects*.

AND since the *Powers* of a rational Nature are *Understanding* and *Will*, it will follow, that those suitable *Objects* must be such as are most worthy to be *known* and *desired*; those being the most naturally adapted to give the *Understanding* its proper Ply; as also to bind down the *Will*, to the steadiest Application to them.

BUT if we survey the extensive Variety, the whole Latitude of Material and Spiritual

equal Being; no *Object* presents it self, so worthy, to be *known* and *desired* as God: Because, not only the *supreme Good*, the *Subject* and great *Pattern* of all rational *Perfection* and *Excellence*; and so suited to engage the *Will*; but also as being the *Cause* of all, both that does, and shall, or can exist, and so the fixed, immoveable Foundation of *Reality* and *Truth*, which is the proper and most delightful *Object* of the *Understanding*; and of which it has naturally, as Lively and Just a Perception, as the *Senses* of Material Impressions. *as being*

AND from hence it will follow, that, as the *Happiness* of a created rational Nature must consist in *Knowing* and *Cleaving* to God; so by a Parity of Reason, it must be the Higher and most ^{re}exquisite, the more vigorously the *Understanding* is exercised in the *Perception* of his transcendent Excellencies and Perfections; and the greater Variety, Strength, and steadiness there is in its Contemplations of that Kind; and the more forceable the consequent *Efforts* of the *Will* in cleaving to him, not only as the most desirable *Good*, and transporting *Object* of its

its Love, ; but also the shining *Pattern* for its Imitation; an Holy Ambition of aspiring to be like him, being the natural Result of that Seraphick Love.

FOR since the most *perfect* in its Kind is the *Measure* of all others, it will follow that God, being the most *Perfect* of the whole *rational* Nature, must needs be the *Supreme Pattern* of the several Kinds of *reasonable* Beings; and all Individuals under them. And consequently they are to be esteemed, in their Volitions and Actions, as *far perfect*, as they look up to him the great *Sovereign Standard* of their Nature.

AND on the other side, so far as the *Will* or *Act*, counter to him, so far are they to be consider'd, as *Mishapen* and *Mortuous* in their Kind; being distorted into a *Figure*, disagreeing with their great *perfect Exemplar*: And while they continue so, they are as incapable of true *Happiness*, as a Body is of Ease, with a disjoyned *Limb*.

FOR, as God has *Infinite Happiness*, because He discerns nothing in himself, but

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3. what is absolutely *perfect*, what exactly answers the lovely Ideas of his own Infinite, All-comprehending *Reason*; so 'tis, in proportion, with all other rational Beings, when conscious that they *chuse* and *act* with rectitude, answering the Dignity of their *Frame*; continually aspiring to fashion their Tempers, and mould, as it were, the Features of their Nature, in conformity to that perfect *Idea*, the most noble *Pattern* and Exemplar before them, thereby gradually to acquire a God-like *Manner*, and *intellectual Sympathy*, so as to be transformed into *Living Images* of their Maker.

SINCE therefore it is evident, that the *Perfection* and *Happiness* of a created rational Nature ariseth, of course, from its *knowing, cleaving to, and imitating* God; it will follow, that it is capable of higher Degrees of both the more lively and extensive *Perceptions* it has of him, as an *Exemplar* to it. So that it appearing in general, wherein the *Happiness*, properly so call'd, of Mankind, must consist. Our next step must be to enquire in what Degree it was attained before the *Fall*; and,

and, I may add, in what Degree it was so, before *Christ's* actual *Manifestation* in the *Flesh*.

FOR, tho' upon the *Fall*, as I have shew-
ed, Mankind had the *Merit* of his *Sacrifice*
applied to them from the Date of the *Pro-*
mise itself; yet, as we have seen also, they
were universally *ignorant* how it came about,
or whence the *Effects* of it arose; so that
as to any *Knowledge* of God, attainable by
that great *Transaction*, they were (except
in one Instance, which I have already men-
tioned, and shall farther hereafter) much
upon the same Foot, as if he had not been
promised at all.

Now, if we consider our Nature as it
came, in *Innocence*, out of the Hand of its
Creator, God fore-saw how very soon it
would *fall* from its primitive Purity, and
therefore design'd it farther, for a much
happier State, raised and refined by a clear-
er and more extensive *Manifestation* of him-
self: But had it *stood*, the Reward, (at least
as far as we know) would have been the
indefeazable Possession of a *Paradise* in this
World; the enjoying an Immortal Life
here

here on Earth chequer'd, as it were, with spiritual and sensitive, or animal Pleasures.

AND for their Conduct in that State, God seems to have left our first Parents (one or two Instances excepted) under the Direction of the *Law of Nature*; the spiritual or religious Part of which, taught them to look up to him as the *Creator* of the World, the Lord and Author of their Being; and to fear and obey him as their Almighty Sovereign. The *civil* Part of it, furnished them with *right Reason*, dictating what was necessary to be done, in order to their well being in this World.

So that had they stood, their *Happiness* would probably have been (tho' in a higher and more refined Degree and under an exacter Regulation of their Powers) what that of Mankind, was afterwards (antecedent, and without regard to our Lord's *Manifestation in the Flesh*) a mixture of rational and sensitive, or bodily Enjoyments.

AND as to any *Knowledge* of God farther than that now mention'd, it may, I conceive, be thought reasonable to presume, that they had the same awful Sense of his *Veracity* as of any other *Attribute*; and yet

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how easily were they wrought into a *Belief*, by the first Story they heard, and from they knew not whom; that he had acted *Collusively* in barring them the *Fruit* of the *Tree of Knowledge*; designing by it only, to keep them down under the Vail of *Ignorance*? And that there was no such imminent Danger of *Death*, consequent upon the Tasting it, as they were at first made to believe?

WHATEVER such *Knowledge* therefore we suppose them to have had, it may be doubted, its Impressions were not vivid and *forceable* enough to influence their *Wills*, to suitable Efforts, in *loving* and *cleaving* steadily to him: Since no one can *Love*, whom he does not *believe*; and without *Faith*, its as *impossible* to *Love*, as to please *God*: So that those Impressions, could not consequently be very Instrumental in making an Addition to their *Happiness*, as has been shewn above.

NAY, as to *Adam* himself in particular, it may perhaps, seem reasonable to think, he had not so much as that profound *Reverence* and awfull *Regard* for the Divine Majesty, which he might justly have been expected to express (tho' not under the Circumstances of

a Criminal) since after the *Fact* committed, he seems attempting to skreen his *Guilt*, even by throwing the Blame *obliquely* upon God himself. Where he Answers, *the Woman*, whom thou gavest to be with me, *she gave me of the Tree, and I did eat.*

And after all, whatever we suppose, that *original Light*, or Knowledge of our first Parents to have been; and whatever *Discoveries* the artful Reasonings of some few learned and comtemplative Men afterwards wrought out concerning the *Excellencies* and *Perfections* of the Divine Nature: It is certain, if we consider the general State of Mankind, the *Notices* left upon them will appear too languidly impressed, to point out the essential *Attributes* of it: Or even to instruct them farther, than, that there is a *God* to be addressed to for suitable Supplies, in which *Discovery* also they were guided (as the (a) *Apostle* intimates) by the *Things that are made.*

AND indeed its not much to be wonder'd, if in that first more perfect State, but more especially afterwards, they should

(a) Rom. *fi.* 20.

have been able to go but little farther than their *Senses* pointed out their Way.

FOR the *Understandings* of Mankind being too short-sighted, to reach directly into the *Essences* of Things ; they can come at them only, either by their *Causes* or *Effects* : But God can't be known the former of these *Ways*, because existing of or from himself : Wherefore he is discoverable only by his *Works*. Our *Knowledge* of him must creep gradually on, guided by the *Track* that they leave for us : And by which, respectively, we gain *Ideas* of his *Attributes*.

BUT the *Works* whereby, before, and independent of the coming of *Christ*, he manifested himself, were those of *Creation* and *Providence*, which shewed forth his infinite *Wisdom* and *Power*, directing Mankind to acknowledge and adore him, as the first *Cause* and sovereign *Disposer* of all Things.

THESE were pointed out by *sensible* Evidences to the more discerning Part of the Heathen World : But more especially to the chosen People ; and as they look'd up to God, as the *Maker* and Sovereign *Disposer* of all Things in this lower World ;

we see their *Obedience*, answering these Ideas, was guarded, almost solely, by the Views of *temporal* Rewards and Penalties.

THE being blessed in a wealthy, lasting, and numerous Offspring; the enjoying a *Land flowing with Milk and Honey*, and being prosperous in all the Articles of their Increase, were the *Promises*: And the being cursed in, or deprived of these, were the *Punishments*, that possessed their Thoughts:

So that the stipulated Inheritance of the Land of *Canaan*, with the Pleasures and Advantages it was furnish'd with, appears to have been, as it were, a *Bond* or *Securition* upon their good Behaviour, to preserve them from Idolatry, and under a due Observation of the *Law*.

IN the same Manner also, their *Praises* and *Thanksgivings* point, we see, generally at the Enjoyment of the Accommodations of this *present Life*, expressing their grateful Sense of the Riches and Plenty of the Creation; as also Deliverances from *Temporal Evils*: All which, being the sensible Rewards and Advantages of continuing in their Duty, seem designed

signed by the Divine Wisdom, to enforce a steady dependence, and thereby check and bridle their Licentiousness.

NEITHER, in the main, seems the Religion of the Patriarchs, to have risen any thing higher, for (a) Jacob, we see, vows to acknowledge and worship the God of his Fathers, under the modest Condition of being supplied with Bread to eat, and Reward to put on. And even (b) Abraham when God assures him by a Visionary Revelation, that he would be his exceeding great Reward, replies to that gracious Promise, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go Childless? Or have none but a Servant to heir my Substance?

So the Religion of thole Times, also under the Law, as far as we can learn from the Writings of Moses, seem generally speaking, to import the acknowledging and looking up to God as an Almighty Sovereign, able to make their Lives prosperous, and crown them with all Blessings relating to this World.

(a) Gen. xxviii. 20.

(b) Gen. xv. 2.

WE have seen then, in great measure, what Degree of the *Knowledge* of God, was attained by Mankind both before, and after the *Fall*, without regard to, or dependence upon the coming of *Christ*: And to what height their *Religion* arose, as built upon it.

It appears to have been founded on the Ideas of his Infinite *Wisdom* and *Power*; for, as to his *Mercy*, and the Idea of his *Goodness* resulting from it, manifested in accepting the *Repentance* of Sinners, and remitting the *Punishments* threatned, (of which all Mankind, but especially the *chosen People*, had Experience) we have already accounted, as issuing from the *Merit* of the universal *Propitiation*.

BUT it is to be consider'd, that, as the above-mention'd Ideas of infinite *Wisdom* and *Power* amount to but a very faint, and imperfect representation of God to the *Understanding*; so since they had naturally to create only *Dread* and *Admiration*, they could scarce have any perceptible Effect, to influence the *Will* to

to embrace and cleave steadily to him, as the transporting *Object* of its Love! (for the loving him, and celebrating his *Goodness*, chiefly as a *temporal* Benefactor, has a low, selfish Regard, far from actuating that generous exalted *Principle* in the Soul, whereby it is naturally rais'd to the Love of a Being transcendently *perfect* and excellent (for what he is in himself) and consequently, as placed in that Light, he must be far from being an adequate *Object* for the unrestrained, steady, and vigorous *exercise* of those *Powers* in which, we have shewn above, the *Happiness* of a rational Nature must consist. From whence it follows, that Mankind had not, by Means of *those Ideas*, so extensive and perfect *Knowledge* of God as was requisite to advance their *Happiness*, properly so called, as *rational Agents*, to any considerable Degree: Nor, consequently, to be the Foundation of a *Worship* worthy of him.

FOR, as a Man's Ideas of God are, such will his Service of him and *Worship* be, either refined and spiritual, or abject and superstitious, answering the Idol of his own

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CH. 3. in Answer, &c. 41

Imagination: And such, in probability, will be his Morals and course of Life; since every zealous Votary makes his God his Example, and esteems his *resemblance* of him, his greatest Glory.

Now its certain, no *Worship* can be esteem'd worthy of God, but what results from the combining Ideas of all *Perfection*: Those only being of Force to engross and captivate all those *Powers* wherewith a rational Agent is capable of pursuing an Object infinitely excellent, and lovely in every respect.

SINCE therefore its evident, that the *Manifestations* resulting from the Works of *Creation* and *Providence* only, were in no Degree commensurate to these important Ends; the *Faculties* of our rational Nature must have lain dormant and useless, as to the greatest *Happiness* it was capable of attaining by the *exercise* of them; and as to the highest *Honour* and most refined and exalted *Worship*, it was in itself, qualify'd to pay to the Divine Majesty, unless he had pleas'd to make Provision for the farther *Manifestation* of himself: Which, in what manner

manner he has, in his infinite *Wisdom*, and *Goodness*, determined to effect, will appear, by laying open that most advantageous *Change*, which has been made as to these and other respects, by the Appearance of *Christ* in the *Flesh*.

FOR, if it be shewn that by that amazing *Transaction*, he has so display'd the infinite Excellencies and *Perfections* of his *Nature*, as to give the utmost possible Scope to the whole *rational Creation*, to exert their noble *Faculties*, and strain them up to the most exalted, astonishing *Thoughts* of, and seraphical *Devotion* to him; if farther, he has thereby applied the most proper and forcible *Means* to rectify the *moral Errors*, reform the *Vices*, and over-awe the daring *Wickedness* of Mankind; And *Lastly*, if it be shewn, that he has done all this, in such a *manner*, that it could not have been effected to that Advantage any other way; then will it be demonstratively Evident that whereas he fore-saw, from all Eternity, that *Man*, whom he had decreed to create, would (if not protected, or restrained) abuse his natural Liberty, and so, being tempted, fall into Sin; there was infi-

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finite Reason, on this Account, as well as that mention'd before, why he might have pleas'd also to have decreed to permit it; Thereby to open a Way for the stupendous *Manifestation* of himself, as above expressed. And particularly (as to the Proposition I am now upon) that by what followed from it, Mankind became capable of attaining far greater *Happiness* than they would have been, had our first Parents continu'd innocent.

AND as we observed above, with Regard to the former *State of Religion*, that it was by the Works of *Creation* and *Providence*, that the infinite *Wisdom* and *Power* of God, were set forth and revealed to Mankind; so here I shall not insist on the Declarations he has made of himself in the Writings of the New Testament. Nor on the transcendent Excellence and Perfection of its *Doctrine* and *Precepts*; or the unparallel'd *Authority* with which they were enforced by our Saviour's Preaching, as also his *Miracles*; and above all the *Character* under which he appear'd. But shall address my self to consider only the farther *Manifestations* of the Divine Nature shining forth in the most remarkable Circumstances of this great Transaction; the

44 *A Dissertation, &c.* CH. 3.

Incarnation of our Saviour Christ; with the important Consequences of it.

FOR since it is in *Examples*, or by his *Works* that we see the *Divine Attributes*, as it were aliye and in Motion, exerting themselves in a *sensible* affecting Way, they must needs strike the Mind with a more lively Air, and make a far more vigorous Impression, than any other Revelations could do, setting them forth to us. Because they address themselves to the Mind in a *natural* Way; not barely leaving it upon our Faith, to *believe*, but letting us *see* what he is; and must have consequently a far more powerfull *Effect* in answering the *Design* of them.

FOR it being the End of his *Manifestations* of himself, not only to guide us into right and worthy *Conceptions* of him, but answerably to excite and influence our *Practice*; the more lively and affecting they are, the more forceably conducive they will be to that great End.

AS therefore the Advantage is evident in his taking that Way, to set forth the Excellencies, and *Perfections* of his *Nature*; so his Conduct towards the chosen People shews, that he does point it out as the *Means* whereby

whereby he expects Men should attain a Knowledge of him: In that he appeals perpetually to his *Wonders* wrought for them in *Egypt*, in the *Red Sea*, in the *Wilderness*, and upon their Entrance into the promised *Land*; as also the Settlement of their Possession, his *Administration* over them, and many wonderful Deliverances vouchsafed them there, as both the *Evidences* of his infinite *Power* and *Wisdom* above all the Gods of the *Heathen*; and the consequent *Motives* of their steady Dependence on him, and firm Attachment to his Service.

CHAP. IV.

Of Man's being created capable of Sin.

BEFORE I enter on the important Subject, specified above (that nothing in this *Letter* may be said to pass unconfuted) I shall here just glance upon that *Paragraph*, where the Author, speaking, as people pretend, the Sense of many Thousands, expresses

expresses his uneasiness, because not created
such Perfection as to be incapable of Sin.

BUT since he could not make, nor can
now annihilate; however he may possibly
mislike himself; he has nothing more to do
but to make the best of the Being, that God
has given him. And since he finds it will
be eternally Happy, if he is not wanting
himself; common Sense must dictate, that
instead of amusing himself with Chimerical
Suppositions concerning the Consequences
of what he sees, God has not thought fit
to do; much less setting up his own Wisdom
and blasphemously asserting, that Matter
had been infinitely better, if adjusted
Vay: Instead, I say, of any Thing of the
common Sense must dictate to him, to pro-
strate himself with humblest Thankfulness
and address all his Force to secure that Ha-
ppiness, which he finds himself in a Capacity
of, and is undoubtedly within his reach.

BUT for his farther Satisfaction, I shall
here hint something briefly, with Reference
to the antecedent Reasons, which, I
may beg leave to conjecture, settled the
Creation of Mankind in the State we find

is, with Regard to the *Freedom* of determining themselves, as to *Good* or *Evil*; and superinduced this last and grand *Dispensation* of the *Messiah*.

AND it may be consider'd, that, as it is the *intellectual Worship* of God, which recognises his infinite *Excellencies* and *Perfections*; it is the devoted *Homage* and *Subjection* of the *Will* only, which expresseth an Acknowledgment of, and *Deference* to his universal *Sovereignty*; and consequently a *Service* the most honourable, and so most acceptable to him of all others; and that in a higher Degree, by how much it is performed with greater *Difficulty*; by the Conquest of inbred counter-striving Principles, or Opposition from without: Of which Truth, we have a remarkable Evidence in those Gospel-precepts, so frequently inculcated, of *laying our selves*; and *taking up the Cross*; more particularly, in that great Duty, *forgiving Injuries*, and *rendering Good for Evil*, which the State of the World is so far from requiring, that, crowded as it is with evil Men, it admits only the private exercise of it.

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WE have also another signal *Demonstration* in his dealing with *Abraham*, concerning the Sacrificing his Son *Isaac*, *Gen. xxii.* And it seems so highly *pleasing*, because a Testimony of that *awful Fear*, which enforces a zealous Determination to do as he has commanded, for this Reason only, because it appears to be his *Pleasure*.

As therefore its undoubtedly most for his *Glory*; so it appears most *acceptable* to him, to be obeyed by the rational Creation, acting by *free choice*, according to their natural *Powers* and *Capacities*, rather than as determin'd, or fate by *Necessity*; either without *Freedom of Will*, or restrain'd from making Trial of it.

AND without that *Freedom*, there could be no possibility, properly speaking, of paying him *Obedience*, since *Obedience* seems to suppose *Choice*; and by consequence, the *Power* of disobeying.

FOR a Creature acting under absolute *Necessity* can, in reality, be said to obey him no otherwise than the Flame does in mounting upwards, or heavy Bodies in their descent. So that such a State of Conformity to the *Divine Will*, could be no Evidence

of regard to it, nor consequently Foundation for Reward.

AND farther, with respect to his universal Sovereignty; the Glory of his *Wisdom* is much more advantageously display'd in governing Men as *free Agents*, than if forcibly restrain'd from Sin: In that it thereby exerts, and illustrates itself in over-ruling Events, so as to bring Good out of Evil, and make sinful Actions as subservient to the Interests of Religion, and bringing about the gracious Dispensations of *Providence*, as the most virtuous and warrantable could have been.

TO this may be added, That those *Rewards* also seem most becoming an all-wise Sovereign to bestow, which are brought out and earned by *Duties*, or services enjoyn'd; (such especially which cause most of *Self-denial*) as rendering his Authority more conspicuous and revered.

So that all Things duly weigh'd, we need not be at a Loss to conceive, what might have determined the Divine *Wisdom* to create Mankind, not in such an advanced State, as to be *incapable of Sin*; (in

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case it could have been done, or were even *consistent* with the Nature of a *rational* Creature, and *finite* Perfection) but compounded of two contrary *Natures*, by the *one* nearly allied to their great Creator, by the other on a Level with the Beasts that perish.

As therefore they are *free Agents*, (having the important Issues of their endless *Happiness*, or *Misery* left to their own Conduct) and are also under the Direction of *unerring Reason*, where they fully comprehend the *Terms* of the Proposition, and stand not in their own Light; And, *Lastly*, Have their Minds stamp'd with those *Divine Impresses*, the *Knowledge of Truth* and the *Love of Goodness*; so on the other side, they are harrass'd with restless *Passions* which make War upon one another, and with a confederate Force, against the Power and Influence of the *Mind*; and are therefore the more mutinous, because having had the *Conduct* of their Infancy and early Youth, they, as it were, *fore-stall* the Judgment, pleading a kind of prescriptive Right to *chuse* for them, and govern the *Necessities* and *Interests* of Nature.

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BESIDES, that they are way-laid by the malicious *Subtilty* of *Satan*, and allured by numberless Incentives to Evil, adapted to every incident Circumstance and Period of *Human Life*; which therefore may not improperly be consider'd as a *Road*, in which fresh set of *Temptations* lie for them at every *Stage*, and forward them on, till at length they lodge them in the Grave. Nay, it may be very truly said, there is scarce a sensual Gratification that the World presents them with, which has not a deadly *Hook* conceal'd, to surprize and strike them to their ruin.

ON all which Accounts, as God fore-saw they would be remedilessly miserable, should his *Justice* make a peremptory *Claim* upon every *Transgression*; so it appeared a more proper Expression of his infinite *Wisdom* as well as *Goodness*, not to conclude them upon the first successful Surprize of any *Temptation*; but allow them repeated Tryals of their *Obedience*, and Opportunities of *after-Wisdom*, that so at length, upon their Experience of the Issues of *Good* and *Evil*; the Authority of his Laws might, to his far greater Honour, take place upon them:

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Not barely by the Terrors of his *Wrath*; but such rational *Convictions* as might enforce their *Obedience* by a confirmed, deliberate *Choice*, and establish a glorious and truly divine *Sovereignty* in their *voluntary Subjection*.

So that upon the whole, for these *Reasons*, and many more, perhaps, than any Man can possibly set forth; it appears evidently to have been, no less the Dictate of his infinite *Wisdom* than *Goodness*, and very highly for the Advancement of his *Honour*, to take Advantage of the first *Transgression*, our newly created *Parents* were tainted with, to rescue Sinners from the grapple of his *Justice*, by the substitution of an infinitely *expiatory Sacrifice* to be offered to it: And thereby to open at once, that Scene of Wonders, wherein, not only his *Wisdom* and *Goodness* (as we just now observed) but his astonishing *Love*, *Purity*, *Truth*, *Justice*, *Mercy*, and most awful *Majesty* and *Holiness* display'd themselves.

CHAP. V.

Of the glorious Manifestations made of the Divine Attributes in the Sufferings and Death of Christ.

IN Pursuance of what I treated of at large, in the third Chapter, and hinted in the close of this last; I now proceed to consider the amazing Discoveries made of the Excellencies and Perfections of the Divine Nature in this wonderful Dispensation.

THAT, upon our blessed Lord's voluntarily offering himself, the Father should please to accept his Sacrifice, as a perpetual standing Satisfaction for all successive Generations of penitent reforming Sinners; was such a Miracle of condescending Goodness and Almighty Love, as would have been beyond any created Capacity to believe, not sensibly manifested by the living Fountain of Certainty and Truth.

NOR was the Manifestation less surprising of the transcendent Purity of his Nature, his tremendous Justice and Severity against

against Sin, in exacting the *Punishment* requisite to compleat the infinite expiator's Merit of that most precious *Sacrifice*.

FOR if we take a View of that dreadful *Scene* opening first in the Garden at Mount *Olivet*, where we find our Lord's human Nature starting back, as shock'd with Horror at the Prospect; it is certain, that whatever Force could possibly be conceiv'd in the most moving, pathetic *Supplication*, in the bitter Strains of remorseful *Abhorrence*, and all the Eloquence of self-condemning *Grief*, mitigate the *Wrath* of Heaven; all was infinitely out-done by that amazing *Agony*. The Style in which the *Evangelists* describe it, cannot but raise in us the most affecting Idea of the Extremity of it.

FOR (as has been well observ'd) the Words *λυπεῖσθαι ἐν δαμνείσθαι* and *ἀδύναμι* in the Gradation, as they place them, speak a higher Sense than our Translation does, perhaps our Language can express. The least that they import is, That he was suddenly struck with *Sorrow*, *Amazement*, and *Horror* encompass'd with *Grief*, over-whelm'd with astonishing *Fear*, and press'd down with *Consternation* and *Despondency* of Spirit.

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Whilst the distracting Impressions of *Dread*,
Despair, and *Indignation*, with Regard to the
 exquisite Pains and Scandal of the *Cross*; his
 ardent *Love* to Mankind, his implacable *Ha-*
trid of Sin, his restless and undaunted
Zeal for the Honour of God; and all in the
 most intense Degrees, made their united
 assault upon him.

So that such being the Labours and Stri-
 ngs of his *Thoughts*, such the flaming
passions which came upon his Mind at once,
 and possess'd, and struggled in his Breast; it
 is far from being Matter of Wonder, that he
 should have complain'd, his *Soul* was ex-
 ceeding sorrowful even unto *Death*; and
 that the Anguish he was seized with,
 wounded it so deep, as to bleed thro' his Bo-
 dy, in such a *Sweat* as never was, nor ever
 will be parallel'd in human Nature.

It is most natural to conceive, that from
 the dreadful Apprehension of the *Guilt* of
 Mankind, in all the heightening Circum-
 stances of its Aggravation, under which he
 was to suffer, his *Heart* was preternaturally
 moved, and as it were, melted within him;
 answering that propheticall Description by
 the (a) *Psalmist*, where he speaks of the
 Sufferings

(a) Psal. xxii. 14.

Sufferings of the *Messiah*) so as to force a Passage for his rarified Blood, by such wonderful Ebullition.

AND yet the Divine Purity and Justice its unrelenting Hatred and Severity against Sin, held out impregnable against the Battery of such a forceable Deprecation.

AND after all, when he was buffeted, scourged, and crown'd with Thorns; Nay while hanging on the Cross, covered with Wounds and Blood, he burst out, under a despairing Sense of Desertion, into that bitter postulating Complaint; *my God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?* The very Frame of Nature sympathized in Agony; the Sun turned away its Face, the Rocks rent, the whole Earth was shock'd and convuls'd; yet the Father (tho' he was infinitely dear and precious in his sight) armed with the same innexorable Justice, and unappeasable Severity against those Sinners, under whose Guilt he lay, stood impenetrably hardened against his mournful Cries, utterly refusing to remit any the least aggravating Circumstance of that cruel, shameful, and accursed Death necessary for the Expiation of it.

But

BUT on the contrary, his unrelenting Vengeance being (if I may so speak) strengthen'd by *Justice*, in whose Quarrel it had declar'd it self, he *made his Arm bare* against him, darting into his Soul the Rebukes of his Wrath, and possessing his Mind with the amazing unconceivable Terrors of the Guilt of the whole World of Sinners, for whom he suffer'd: So that *the Poyson* of his *Arrows* *crinking up* his Spirit, that inward invisible Torture he felt, was too racking, too exquisite for Nature to grapple with: His Heart firm, as it was, soon languish'd, and was broken under it. For the Evangelist tells us, that after he had burst again into that exceeding bitter Cry, *he bowed his Head* and resigned his Soul.

CERTAINLY, the miraculous *Darkness*, which then over-spread the Earth, was but a low, faint Resemblance, of that Cloud of *Horror*, which in those last *Agonies* must have Sate upon his Mind. Since, besides the Exquifiteness of the Pain he suffer'd in his Body, the most spirituous Part of the Poyson of Sin, the very Essence and Malignity of it were distill'd off, and the most ghastly Terrors of *Death* were added into

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that Cup of Trembling, the very Dregs of which were wrung out for him.

AND yet it must be own'd, after whatever Strains of Conjecture, as to the Intensity of his inward *Sufferings*, that, Appearances duly weigh'd, there seems to have been something in them, either by positive *Infliction*, or *Destitution*, or both, beyond what we can form any *Idea* of. Though we have a Sense, that deep Horror, with a despairing inconsoleable Pungency of *Thought* must be *Misery* without alloy.

Now upon the whole; what higher and more *awful* Demonstration could God possibly have given of the infinite *Purity* and *Holiness* of his Nature, and utmost Indignation against Sin?

THE holy Angels, no doubt, beheld this *Spectacle* with Astonishment, trembling at the dreadful Severity of his *Justice*, though at the same Time nested safe under the Wings, and dazled with the Rays of his Favour. Nay, its highly reasonable to conclude that had the Devil had this amazing Example before his Eyes, he had never fallen. As the Terrors of such inflexible *Justice*

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armed with *Power*, would have over-whelmed with desponding Fear; so the first Risings of rebellious Thoughts against such transcendent *Goodness*, and endearing *Love* had firuck him with Abhorrence: He had consider'd God as a Sovereign, whom no one can once think of offending without putting off *rational Nature*; and doing Violence to all the *Powers* of it, capable of a Perception of what is great, excellent, and lovely.

LET it be consider'd then, what Sentiments Mankind ought to entertain, to purchase whose *Indemnity*, this deepest Tragedy was acted, that ever appear'd upon the Stage of the World. Certainly it may reasonably be thought, that if we are not utterly lost to all that *it* is ingenuous, tender, and considerate in human Nature; our Hearts must spring with *Joy*, and burn with *Love*, and all the Powers of our Souls flow out in Praises and Thanksgivings, under such Manifestations of Almighty *Goodness*, *Mercy* and *Love* here set forth, and laid open to us in the most tender, engaging Manner, we can possibly conceive. Nay, such in reality, as not all the Force of sublimest Reason,

and brightest Colours of *Fancy*, animated by the warmest and boldest *Figures*, ever did or could describe, and justly set forth the Degree of.

It was such a *Love*, the Ideas of which as appearing in this great *Transaſtion*, are so awfully *Myſterious*, that while we contemplate them we ſeem to be looking down, as it were, from ſome amazing Height, whence our bottomleſs View, gives a kind of ſacred Horror, ſtrains and over-powers our *Faculties*, at the ſame Time that we moſt thankfully rejoyce and triumph in it.

ON the other ſide, the infinite *Dignity* of our *Lord's Perſon*, and his unparallel'd *Sufferings*, whereby this wonderful Redemption was wrought out, and compleated for us, raiſe naturally the moſt reverential Senſe of God's infinite *Purity* and *Holineſs*; and a moſt affecting Dread of his inexorable *Juſtice*. The Punishment inflicted on the *Rebel-Angels*, and for the *Sin* of *Adam*, might, it is poſſible, be perversly miſ-interpreted, as the reſult of a reſtleſs, fiery Jealouſy of his *Authority*, and *Honour*, an impatience of Contradiſtion, or of any Thing that might look like rivalling his *Sovereignty*: But as

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this wonderful *Transaction* stands circumstantiated, it could not possibly be understood otherwise, than as the Effect of that unerring *Rectitude* and *Justice*, which is an essential and shining *Attribute* of the Divine Nature.

FOR since, in Consideration of our Pardon, he would admit no meaner *Sacrifice*, than, that of his only begotten Son; he has thereby (consistent with his infinite Goodness and most tender *Love*) expressed the utmost possible *Indignation*, the most formidable *Severity* against our Sin. So that this of his *Mercy* it self is dreadful; and guarded with Thunder. And that Sinner who shall presume to persevere against it, must undoubtedly be armed with an invincible Forehead, to out-stare Damnation, and defy the Tortures of *eternal Death*: Nay should the bottomless *Pit* throw aside its Covering, and Re-open before him, at once, that amazing scene of *Terrors*; so that he should hear the audible Shrieks, and gnashings of the damned; and see them weltering in the Flames of fire; it could not give him so tremendous a demonstration of the Divine Vengeance against Sin, as what is here expressed.

So

So that, on all Accounts, it is undeniably evident, that the *Extremity* of our Lord's *Sufferings* is so far from being justly censur'd by any ; or affording, in general, Matter of Exception, as has been the wilful Thought, as well of the Antients, as the *Infidels* of these Days: That, on the contrary, it was the result of Council and Almighty *Wisdom*, as the directest and readiest Means possible, to establish an awful Idea of God's *Sovereign Justice*, and manifest the other adorable *Attributes* specified above in a manner most eminently and effectually conducive, as to his own *Glory*, so to the Advantage and *Happiness* of Mankind.

SINCE, as nothing could possibly bind them down to a more devoted and resigned Obedience, and guard the Lines of Duty with a more impregnable Fortress, than the *Severity* of this astonishing Dispensation; so, on the other side, (considering the transcendent *Goodness* and *Love* shining in it) nothing, in case of Sin, could more forcibly strike the Delinquent with a piercing *Sense*, and animate him to a firmer and more steady Reformation.

AND this is a Consideration which may lead us naturally to open the Reason of two or three Particulars, observable in the Economy of the Gospel Institution.

1st. THAT those are comparatively very strict Laws which our Saviour has enacted; for these Manifestations tending, of Course, to raise Men to far more advanced Refinements in Piety and Virtue, naturally make way for his keeping a stiffer Rein, and exacting much perfecter Degrees of Duty and Obedience, than those imposed under the former Dispensation.

2^{dly}. THAT there is such infinite weight laid upon the Duty of Faith. For, since the belief that our Saviour Christ is God and Son of God, the only begotten of the Father; and that he was, by him, (upon his voluntary offering himself) subjected to extreme Sufferings, to a cruel and shameful Death, for the Redemption of Mankind; by satisfying the divine Justice in their behalf; and that they are intitled to many inestimable Benefits specify'd in the Gospel, as consequent upon this great Transaction: Since, I say, this

this *Belief* gives the highest Demonstration possible of the inflexible Severity of God's *Justice*, how *pure*, *holy*, and abhorrent of Sin his Nature is; as also of his infinite *Goodness*, *Mercy* and *Love*, it must be *Faith*, which addresses itself to every *Passion*, and actuates all the most vigorous Principles of *Duty*, as offering at once, the most *encouraging* and *dreadful* Considerations: It must, of Course be effectual, as on the one side, to *mortify* the most daring, on the other, to *melt* down the most hardened Sinner, and draw him on to Repentance, and Amendment of Life, by the Cords of irresistible Endearment.

SINCE then, this *Faith*, where cordially embraced, is absolutely inseparable from the Duties of *Obedience*; it may well be fixed as the great and standing *Basis* of Religion, of Weight and Strength indefectible to support it.

IT is also farther observable, that whereas *Abraham's Faith*, which we find extolled as highly acceptable to God, had regard only to his *Truth*, in conjunction with his *Wisdom* and *Power*; that of the Christian is of much greater Excellence, and far more extensive

extensive, as it recognizes and vindicates the all-wise *Reasons* which gave Birth to this wonderful *Dispensation*; and, as it includes moreover an Acknowledgment of all the other glorious *Attributes* specified above, as subsisting in the Divine Nature, and here *manifested* in their utmost Perfection. So that, consider'd in its genuine *Purport*, and full *Extent*, it must be an Act of the most exalted, acceptable *Worship*; the most honourable to God of any we can possibly pay him; and so, no doubt, proportionably attractive of the Emanations of his Bounty and Goodness.

BUT, *Thirdly*, The last *Particular* I shall mention as observable, is, that whereas, after God had enforced the Authority of his *Laws* upon the *Chosen People*, by impressing the most terrible Ideas of his *Sovereignty* and *Power*; he found it farther necessary to indulge them, not only the Advantage of Occasional *Revelations*, but of constant Access, by the standing Oracle of *Urim*; and an uninterrupted Succession of *Prophets*, empowered sometimes to work *Miracles*, to convince and reduce them to

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Obedience; whereas, I say, they were, by these Means, in effect, under a perpetual *Theocracy*; after he had so *manifested* himself in this wonderful *Dispensation*, as is above expressed, and set forth in the Writings of the *Gospel*; he thought fit thenceforward, to close up *Revelation*, leaving the Christian World to the ordinary Methods of his *Grace*.

AND tho' a very great Part of it has, for several Ages been so deplorably *corrupted*, as in Appearance, to have no less reasonably demanded a *Fire-Ordeal*, than the *Apostacy* of *Israel* in the Days of *Elijah*; Yet he has seemed determined to be no farther *Decisive*, by vouchsafeing *extraordinary* Interpositions of any kind: By which he may be consider'd, as having finally set his *Seal* to the Excellence, and due Perfection of this most Holy *Institution*: And that he looks on what has been Originally *done* and *revealed*, as so abundantly sufficient; and that (with regard, especially to the important *Issues* of the future World) the most influential *Means* possible have been so applied, to allure and awe Men into Integrity and Uprightness in making use of it, as to leave the Corrupters of the *Faith* without Excuse.

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As therefore, under the present Oeconomy, he seems pleas'd, in his Infinite Wisdom, to permit the *Tares* to grow up, and even ripen amongst the *Wheat*; so the *Fire* at the *Harvest* of the *Resurrection*, will be the fiercer to burn them up.



CHAP. VI.

Of the farther Manifestations of the Divine Attributes and other incident Advantages consequent upon our Lord's mediatorial Office.

WHAT has been already said, may suffice for the opening the glorious *Manifestations* resulting from the *Sufferings* and *Death* of our Saviour Christ.

WE are next to shew, that it was not his *Humiliation* only, that was a Means of setting forth the Excellencies and *Perfections* of the divine Nature; they being farther illustrated by that royal Office of *Mediator*, in which he was enstated, pursuant to what he *did* and *suffered* here on Earth.

FOR, in that the *Father*, far from con-
 descending to any personal intercourse with
 Sinners, suffers them not to present even
 their Tears of Self-abhorrence at his Foot-
 stool, otherwise than by that so honou-
 rable, and even *authoritative Mediation*:
 He gives us such an awful Idea of his Ho-
 lineſs, as we could not have gained any o-
 ther way: And no Consideration could pos-
 ſibly poſſeſs the *Guilty* with ſuch a ſtinging
Conviction of the deteſtable Baſeneſs and
 Pollution of *Sin*, and the infinite Diſtance,
 at which the divine *Purity* and *Holineſs* are
 removed from it.

AND and as to the *Manifeſtation* of his
 tranſcendent *Majeſty*, we find, under the
 Old Teſtament, he ſhewed forth the Glo-
 ry of it, in a very terrible manner, by a vi-
 ſible Appearance on *Mount Sinai*, that the
 amazing Impreſſion on the Senſes of his
 People, might forceably eſtabliſh its *Awe*,
 and *Reverence*: But there could be no poſ-
 ſible Method of poſſeſſing Mankind with
 ſuch affecting Apprehenſions of the dreadful
Sacredneſs of it, as by reſuſing all *Addreſſes*
 and *Supplications*, even of ſuch who are
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within the pale of *Grace* and *Acceptance*, unless dignify'd and enforced by the *Intercession* of the same All-powerful *Mediator*.

IT is impossible but the Sense of this must prostrate Mankind, with profoundest Veneration, with Fear and Trembling before him. Nay the Idea of his transcendent *Beauty* and *Excellence*, cannot more irresistibly allure, than the Thoughts of this his astonishing *Majesty*, must bind down, and exhaust all the Powers of the Soul, in a most steady and fervent Devotion to him.

AND it may here be noted, that there is moreover this important Advantage, towards the directing the Means of, and ascertaining our *Happiness*, farther arising from that great and royal *Office*, in which our Lord is seated at the right Hand of God; that it effectually dashes all *Presumption* in his sinners, and brings their *Hopes* and *Fears* to a due Ballance, such as must acquit both of divine *Justice* and *Mercy*, and highly improve itself to the Reason of Mankind.

SINCE, as God will not pardon any, for whom our Lord *intercedes*; so he, on the other side, pursuant to the *Office* and

and Duty of a just and impartial Mediator, will not *intercede* for any, but under the Conditions originally *stipulated* between the Father and himself, which the *Gospel* has laid open to us: So that the *sanguine* cannot now be animated into a presumptuous Dependance on the divine *Mercy*; nor the *Melancholy* abandoned under the Terrors of inexorable *Justice*.

AND, in reference to this, it may be consider'd also, that it was not conceivable before, how infinite *Justice* and *Mercy* could subsist, and freely exert themselves in the divine Nature, since as *Mercy* pleads for favouring and indemnifying the Criminal; so *Justice* is, in its own Nature, *inflexible* and peremptory in its Demands of Judgment. It may also be thought reasonable to conclude, that both being *infinite*, must demand to the utmost Extent, and claim whatever can in *Justice* and *Mercy* be insisted on. And, as such a seeming Inconsistence had a tendency to create Diffidence and Perplexity in the Minds of the *Contemplative*; so in reference to *Practice*, Self-love naturally inclining Sinners to fancy an Ascendant

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in the divine *Mercy*, it hardened them of Course, into a disregard of the Clamours of Conscience, and a presumptuous Perseverance in Evil.

WHEREAS those *Attributes*, now accommodated to the meanest Understanding, exert themselves entirely, with a natural, uncontested Force. God's *Mercy* does not plead against his *Justice*, which is actually *satisfy'd* and silenced, as to all Sinners within the Terms of Gospel Acceptance. *Christ*, at the right Hand of the *Father*, from the Date of the *Promise*, downward to all Generations, solicites their *Pardon* irresistibly having the *Price* of their *Redemption* in his Hand; nay, either *virtually* or *actually* paid down before his *Intercession*.

ON the other side, as to such who continue, to the last, impenitently unreform'd; or persist obstinately in *Infidelity*, under, or within the reach of the Means of Instruction, and Knowledge of the *Christian Faith*; *Mercy* is entirely quiescent, abandoning them to the same unrelenting *Justice*, under which our Saviour suffered. And it would be very happy for them were their Condition the same, as if he had never been

been *promised*; since the *Apostle* intimates, that it will be incomparably more dreadful, as *neglecting so great Salvation*.

IF therefore Men, by being Sinners, are made *Debtors* to the divine *Justice*; and it can no otherwise be appeased and silenced, but by our Lord's *Intercession*; this supercedes, at once, and cuts off all capricious cavilling at the Method of *Redemption*. They must prostrate themselves, suing for *Salvation* in the Way it is graciously vouchsafed, and fly, with trembling, into the Arms of that *Mercy* purchased for them at so dear a Rate.

AND nothing can be more just than that such, who refuse to take Sanctuary in it, should sink for ever under the Weight of Almighty Wrath; the dreadful, but unavoidable Consequence of *Infidelity*: Since to such who reject and despise so great *Salvation*, depending rather on the guidance of *natural Light*, there remains no more *Sacrifice for Sin*, no other *Fountain* opened for *Uncleanness*.

THEIR Case must needs be concluded both miserable and desperate; in that they are to assure themselves, that if Sinners, they lie under the Severity of

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CH. 7. *in Answer, &c.* 73

the same inexorable *Justice*, whereby the Angels that kept not their first *Estate*, were banished the Mansions of Bliss and Glory, and are reserved under Darknels, in everlasting Chains; which also punished *Adam's Sin*, without regard to his *Repentance*; And, *Lastly*, Which is yet infinitely more, executed that dreadful *Vengeance* on the Son of God himself: For it is in him only, that *Repentance* and Amendment is, and ever was *accepted*; and in virtue of his Almighty *Attonement*; that every act of *Mercy* and *Pardon*, has been all along passed, and will so continue till the Consummation of all Things.

CHAP. VII.

*Of the Happiness of the holy Angels,
as interested in the Manifestations
specified above.*

BEFORE I proceed farther to consider the State of Mankind, with Regard to what has been open'd in the two last Chapters, I beg leave, in short, to offer

a Conjecture, that it is probably no wonder the Manifestation of Christ in the Flesh, with the important Consequences of it, should be thought a *Mystery*, which, as (a) St. Peter tells us, the *Angels desire to look into*; As laying open those Excellencies and *Perfections* of the Divine Nature in a Light, which it is highly reasonable to conclude, they must before have been *Strangers to*.

FOR since no *created* Intellect, has Strength and Perfection enough to act intuitively upon another, tho' of the lowest Order, so as to discern the inward Thoughts and Workings of it; much less may it be supposed capable of making any Discoveries in an *infinite* Being, other than what his *Works* Evidence and point out to it.

BUT all the Inhabitants of Heaven, having ever continued most dutifully faithful and obedient (except those *Apostate-Spirits*, to whom no Favour was shewn, unless the not annihilating them be so esteemed) it was not possible to make among them such stupendous Manifestations, more particularly of his *Love, Mercy, and Goodness*.

(a) 1. *Epist. Chap. i. v. 12.*

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specified above : Nor indeed is it in any Degree reasonable to conceive ; that had they had the Advantage of that *Light* before, or even a certain Knowledge of his Omnipotence, those rebel *Angels* would ever have entertained Thoughts of rising against him.

So that, on both these Accounts, it may probably be concluded, that by this wonderful *Transaction*, he has enlarged the *Views* also of this most noble Part of the rational Creation, vouchsafing them the utmost Scope for the exercising their refined and exalted Faculties, in the most rapturous Thoughts and Contemplations of him.

AND if (as we are assured by (a) God himself) they *shouted for Joy*, upon the *Manifestation* of his infinite *Wisdom* and *Power*, when he laid *the Foundations of the Earth* : And as (we may well conceive) found every Day, fresh Matter of Triumph, and Rejoicing, of Adoration and Praise, as the variety and beauty of the *Creation* increased, and grew on to Perfection : Nay ; if, as we have the very probable Conjecture of an

(a) *Job xxxviii. 7.*

eminently learned and judicious (b) Author; God did not erect this mighty Fabrick, and give it it's beautiful Order and Perfection, in a *Moment*; but digested that *great Work*, as *Moses* describes it, for this very Reason, That those glorious Spirits might be enabled to survey distinctly, and comprehend with more exactness, the respective *Causes*, *Natures*, and *Dependencies* of all Things, as they multiplied successively under their Eyes, and every Day presented them with glorious *Spectacles*, and new Scenes of *Wonder*; whereby, as they might gain a clearer and more extensive View of the infinite *Wisdom* and *Power* of their Creator; so more abundant Matter might be laid for exciting their *Admiration*, for the giving Glory to him, celebrating his Praises, and thereby advancing their own *Happiness*: If I say, this be so, most undoubtedly those amazing Strains, as of his *Justice* and *Severity*, so of his *Goodness*, *Mercy* and *Love*, with that transcendent *Purity* and *Holiness*, manifested in this wonderful *Dispensation*; must be what they incessantly contemplate with the most rapturous *Extasy*;

(b) Dr. Jenkin, cert. of the Christ. Rel. v. 2. p. 206.

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and so raise their tuneful Voices to the utmost possible Pitch, in everlasting Praises and *Hallelujahs* to him. And in particular, it is doubtless from the Idea hereby impress'd of his infinite *Purity* and *Holiness*, the most resplendent and glorious *Attribute*, the very *Beauty* of God, that, we (a) are told, they cry to him continually, *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.*

AND it is in this respect, that we may farther observe a signal Illustration of the infinite *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of God, in so terminating this glorious *Discovery* of himself: For had our blessed Lord taken on him the *Nature of Angels*, to atone for the *Rebellious*, and recover them into a possibility of *Repentance* and *Remission* of their *Sin*; the *Manifestation* could not have extended to us, as not made in our Sight.

So that, tho' we had stood *innocent*, and thereby not in need of any *propitiatory* *Sacrifice*; yet our *Perceptions* and *Knowledge* of God, being in no Degree so clear and exten-

(a) *Rev. iv. 8.*

five; (it being in this most gracious *Dispensation* that they were so wonderfully open'd to us) could not have rais'd, and qualified us for a *Worship* and *Service* so worthy of, and so *honourable* to him; nor consequently so conducive to our own *Happiness*.

WHEREAS now the *Glories* of the Divine Nature shine forth with diffusive Lustre, known and celebrated by the whole rational Creation. For even those wretched, apostate *Spirits*, may in some Sense be said to *magnify* him on this Account; in that they eternally condemn, hate, and curse themselves; tortur'd with most regretful stinging Reflections, and furious Self-Reproaches, for their desperate Madnes in provoking such dreadful, inexorable *Justice*; and their perverse Malignity, in sinning against such transcendent *Goodness*, and most endearing *Love*, as they now see manifested with regard to Man.

BUT as to those *Angels*, which stand confirmed in Innocence and Holiness; were it not very obviou to conceive, how highly their *Happiness* must be advanced by the Perception of these most lovely and sublime *Ideas*; it may possibly be estimated

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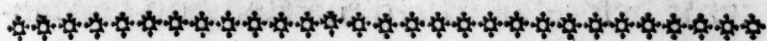
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in some measure, from what we shall here open in Reference to the State of Mankind.



CH A P. VIII.

Of the blessed Effect of the Manifestations mention'd for advancing the Happiness of Mankind: And as a farther Reason, why God might have pleased to permit the fall of Adam.

IT having been already shewn, that the proper Happiness of Man, as a rational Agent must consist in *knowing and cleaving to God*, and endeavouring an *Imitation* of him; we are next to enquire, what Advantage they gained towards the attaining this Happiness by the coming of *Christ*; and that not barely, as enjoyed in this present Life; but as a preparatory Qualification, for the highly advancing it in that to come.

AND it is certain, that whereas the Powers of our rational Nature were susceptible

tible of higher Motives, and a far more extensive Sense of the divine Perfections, than what before animated the Religion of Mankind: We are now dazled with a Glare of heavenly Light, contemplating the divine Majesty, array'd in all the Glory of those charming *Attributes*, infinite *Love*, *Mercy*, *Goodness*, *Purity*, *Wisdom*, *Justice*, *Truth*, *Majesty*, *Holiness*, and whatever else can render any Being the Object of the highest Reverence, Adoration and Love.

THE transcendent excellence of these *Ideas*, has naturally a most forceable Influence to allure the Mind, to fix its *Meditations*, to gather up, as it were, its *Thoughts* about him, and bind them down to dwell upon him; so as finally to be ravished with those his Beauties, and fired with impetuous Desire of rising into a Resemblance of him: There being an in-bred Ambition in a Soul, duly rectify'd and spiritualized, to approve itself to a Being of the most consummate Excellence, and strain to the utmost possible *Imitation* of its *Perfections*; not barely from an expectation of Reward, but a natural Impulse exciting it to admire, and conform itself to the noblest and most perfect *Exemplar*.

FOR,

CH. 8. *in Answer, &c.* 81

FOR, it is not to be conceived, how transportingly enlarged the Mind must be, and its Taste raised and refined, by such amazing *Discoveries* of bottomless mysterious Secrets, in the Excellencies and *Perfections* of the divine Nature: All the *intellectual* Powers of the devout *Believer*, must, no doubt, be swallowed up in so sublime a Contemplation; and his *Will* most entirely resigned to the *Choice*, and Embraces of this supreme *Good*.

AND, as it will of Course, captivate his Affections, and make them unalterably devoted to the Institution and Practice of all heavenly *Virtues*; so particularly will it read him a Lesson of *Humility*, which cannot so effectually be learned any other way: Since the nearer the Soul approaches to God, the more it naturally shrinks in its own Sight, and (if I may so speak) lessens itself into nothing in his Presence.

NEITHER will it be a less effectual Enforcement of the most fervent *Love*, from the Miracle of our Redeemer's *Love* to us, here opened to our view in all its Circumstances of Wonder: Which certainly if there be any thing of Gratitude or Ingenui-

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82 *A Dissertation, &c.* CH. 8.

ty left us, must reciprocally enflame ours, and appear a Motive abundantly cogent to collect and settle its whole Force and Weight upon him; so, as to exert itself in an high superlative way, devoting to him the absolute Empire of our Hearts.

AND it is observable, that this our *Love* of God is a Duty of such infinite Weight and Moment in Religion, that because it is certain, what our Saviour observes, that it is the fulfilling of the Law; as being a most powerful enforcement of *Obedience* in every respect, and indeed the only Principle or Motive, of it acceptable to him; we find it an Injunction to the chosen People, to love the Lord their God with all their Heart, with all their Soul, and with all their Might: But, as it was a bare Precept, so the Manifestations that were to support it, (as far as they were apprized of them) being chiefly those of the divine Bounty in Temporal Blessings, and his pardoning Mercy; their frequent Apostacies into Idolatry, are a too pregnant Evidence how little Effect it had upon them.

WHEREAS the amazing Experience Mankind receives of the divine Love in this

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this wonderful *Dispensation*, has naturally a most forcible influence to dilate the Soul, and inspire it with the highest Ardours to fall as little short, as possible, of a fuitable Return. And it alone demonstrates the great Advance of *Happiness* they, by this Means, become capable of.

FOR, since the Ways whereby we possess, and enjoy God, are *Knowledge* and *Love*, the latter, it is certain, will be much more fervent, the more clear, extensive, and (if I may so speak) *adequate* the former is; and the more exquisite will be the *Happiness*, resulting from both: From whence it follows, that if, as appears, they had not before so clear, and extensive a *Knowledge* of him communicated to them, their *Love* could not have been raised to such a Degree; nor the *Happiness* consequent upon it.

AND it is farther observable, that whereas the End of God's *Manifestations* of himself, is not barely his own *Glory*, but the *Happiness* of those to whom they are made; and for that Reason it is necessary, the particular *Duties* they lead to and enforce, should be of a Nature adapted to promote it: This is in no Instance more evi-

dent, than in that of *Love* to him, which actuated and inflamed by those *Discoveries*, now mention'd, which he has made of himself, is the Source of the most delightful Perceptions that created Reason is capable of.

FOR the most ravishing Complacency must naturally result from that harmonious concurrence, which the Soul contemplates of those *Beauties* in him, tending sweetly to attract and captivate a reasonable Affection; and which will, in their Nature, prove most forcible *Motives*, as of an awful and steady, so a generous, disinterested *Obedience*, in which Hope and Fear, are both swallowed up by *Love*; the exalted Principle that acts in Heaven, and animates the Religion of just Men made perfect.

So that, as this ardent *Love* ariseth naturally from the most lively and extensive Idea of the Excellencies and *Perfections* of the divine Nature specify'd above; so it is an Act of the most exalted and acceptable *Worship*; a Spring effectually enforcing all the practical *Duties* of Religion, and a preparatory Qualification for the rapturous Enjoyment of the future Life.

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FOR the glorious scenery of *Happiness* in that State, may reasonably be supposed to consist, not so much in the external Splendor, and blissful Accommodations of the Place itself, as in the inward *Disposition* of a Man's own Mind, with regard to the agreeableness of *Temper* to the infinite *Object*, upon which his Faculties are there to exert themselves; and, indeed, without these, he could find no sort of *Happiness* in it.

FOR, should he go into Eternity not habitually refined and enobled by this intellectual *Piety*, and ardent *Love*; instead of fastening for ever upon those dazzling Beauties, he will be apt rather to turn away and fly from them, as some Creatures, we see, do from the Meridian Light; because the exercise of his *Powers* upon an unsuitable *Object*, would be a Penance rather than a Felicity: And the more steady and vigorous their Ply is, the more nauseous and forbidding it would be to him.

SINCE then, that exercise of them, which produces *Happiness*, must be the Effect of a natural *Impulse* arising from their Agreeableness

ness to the heavenly *Object* they act upon; it will follow, that, as a certain Degree of suitability to it, acquired in this Life, is a necessary Preparation for the lowest *Happiness* of that to come; so the more elevated Contemplation of it, the Soul has here been inured to; the more adequate and extensive *Perceptions* she has gained; and the more steady and fervent her *Love* is, from the strong *Byas* and Inclination thereby naturally contracted towards it, the more surprizingly Exquisite will be the Felicity she will hereafter enter upon.

AND because there will be different Degrees of it, and yet no envious Repinings, or Discontent among the Saints above, it must follow, that each shall be entirely replete; as not capable of conceiving any *Happiness* greater than his own. Because also the different Degrees of that *Happiness* must arise from the different Measures in which God, the living, inexhaustible *Fountain* of it, communicates himself; it is obvious to conclude, That that *Communication* must answer the Capacity of the recipient: And, consequently, the higher Degree of *Perfection* any pious Soul has now advanced

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itself to, by the *spiritual Exercises* here described, the more extensive will that *Communication* be, and the *Happiness* arising from it.

AND, if we may have *Liberty* to conjecture, that the respective *Perceptions* of any of those glorious *Attributes* of the divine Nature, and the *Habits* of the permanent heavenly *Virtues* resulting from them, which we carry out of this World with us, shall be mightily enlarged and improved; but no new ones added, and that the Stint of the *Happiness* of every *Saint* shall arise from thence: It will amount to yet a farther Reason, why the Soul must, in this Life, be habitually *familiarized* (as is above expressed) to qualify it for the brightest *beatifick Vision*, and to act with that rapturous Extasy, proper to the more exalted State of Heaven; Considering, especially, that when it passes into that blisful Place, thus happily prepared, it will be so entirely captivated with the very first perception of the *divine Glory*, as never, to all Eternity, to be able to withdraw its Eye.

FOR, since a *created Intellect* can never be capable of fully comprehending all that

that is discoverable in an *infinite* Being, (as consequent from the *Manifestations* specified above) every new Attainment of *Knowledge*, every glorious ravishing *Idea* gained will spring fresh, winged, and enflamed *Desires* of farther *Discovery*, and so successively for ever.

IN short, the Soul being in *Union* with God, and glanced upon by numberless Rays of the most dazzling *Glory*; it shall have, at once, a Sense of most entire *Satisfaction*, and incessant *Longings*, ever fathoming, and ever endeavouring to fathom that *Abbyss* of Excellence.

FOR when by these habitual preparatory Exercises in this Life, of seraphick *Knowledge* and *Love*, it has gained lively *Ideas*, and, as it were, a feeling of the divine Nature: This, when it passeth into Eternity, will, like a vital *Spring*, give a perpetual Ply to all its *Powers*; so that as the *Understanding* will be eternally entertained with such an infinity of *Truths*, as it may be discovering and contemplating for ever; so shall the *Will* be eternally gratify'd with such an infinity of *Goodness*,

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SINCE then, upon the whole, it is by the habitual vigorous *perception* of the most adorable *Attributes* specify'd above, and straining to the utmost possible *imitation* of them; as also by the consequent regular Practice of all heavenly *Virtues* thereby necessarily enforced; that the most acceptable *Worship*, and most worthy of God, is paid to him; and our Souls attain the highest possible *Happiness* in this Life, and are gradually elevated to that future blissful *State*, and set, as it were, Unisons to the Harmony of *Heaven*: No more need be said to evince how comparatively deficient a *Religion* must needs be, that is built, (as that before, and independent of our Lord's Appearance in the *Flesh* seems chiefly to have been) on the *Manifestations* resulting from the Works of *Creation* and *Providence*, the Ideas of God's infinite *Wisdom* and *Power*; which, as they yield but a very scanty and imperfect View of the Beauties of the divine Nature; so being *inimitable* Perfections of it, could make no Impressions tending

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ding to animate an holy Ambition in Mankind, for endeavouring a *resemblance* of it: And, consequently, could, upon the Comparison, contribute little towards their *Happiness*, in this Life; or, as a preparatory Qualification for the highest of that to come: Since, as has been shewn, their *Happiness* properly so called, as *rational Agents*, consists in *knowing* and *cleaving* to God, and aspiring to be *like* him; so that the more extensive, steady and vigorous those Acts are, the more exquisite must be the *Happiness* arising from them.

It appears therefore, I presume, in good measure, from what has been already said, that there were important and every way sufficient Reasons, why God might have pleased to permit the Fall of *Adam*, on account of the inestimable Benefit to Mankind, first mentioned, as consequent upon it: The providing a Means by virtue of our Lord's *Stipulation*, for the receiving them to Mercy, after repeated, and even habitual Violations of his Laws. And because of the Way thereby opened for a much more extensive and perfect Discovery of himself, by such astonishing *Manifestations* of his glori-

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ous *Attributes*, as above expressed. There was, I say, infinite Reason why he should have thus opened a Way, by an amazing reach of Wisdom and Goodness, for the more full Discovery of himself; and that with regard both to his own Glory, as celebrated by the whole rational Creation, and the transcendent Advantages to them consequent upon it; but more particularly, and above all to Mankind, as appearing infinitely greater than they would have attained, had our first Parents been preserved: Or had their personal Transgression brought Death and Misery only on themselves, leaving their Posterity, each to the issue of his own Conduct. Happy indeed, in a good measure, if he stood; but irreversibly doomed, without the least hopes of *Atonement*, or any Relief by *Repentance*, in case of Sin.

NAY, it appears that the *Happiness* they are now made capable of rising to, since our Lord's actual Manifestation in the Flesh, is of an higher Nature, and much more extensive and refined than what, in all probability they could have acquired, had not only *Adam*, but they themselves also continued innocent.

I here also farther observe, with reference to what has been shewn above; that since the inexorable Severity of God's *Justice*, could not any other way have been set forth in so dreadful a manner, unless it could have made as high a *Demand*; or an equally precious and costly *Sacrifice*, with that of our blessed Lord, could have been given up and offered to it; since also, on the other side, there could not have been so signal an Instance of his *Goodness*, *Mercy* and *Love*, unless he could, any other way, have strain'd to as great, and (if I may so speak) as Self-denying *Expence* for the extending it, as the bitter Sufferings and Death of his only begotten, his eternal Son: And since lastly, how infinitely *pure*, *holy*, and abhorrent of Sin his Nature is, could not have been shewn in so lively and convincing a way, as by denying Mankind all manner of *access* to the Throne of Grace (either as being, or, at least, having been Sinners) except by the Interposition of so highly dignify'd and *authoritative* a *Mediator*, unless he had resolved never to admit them at all; it is very plain, there could not have been so high an Evidence given of
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† 2 Cor. 3

that his infinite *Purity* and *Holiness*, consistent with his *Goodness*, *Mercy* and *Love*.

I conclude therefore, as evident upon the whole, what I proposed to shew, that he could not have been *manifested* to so great Advantage any other way, for the springing in a *Light* upon the whole rational Creation, and enabling them, in such a measure, to see him as he is; not as to the external brightness of his *Majesty*, visible only in the heavenly State; but that inward *intellectual Glory* of the transcendent *Excellencies* and *Perfections* of his Nature.

THUS † in the Apostle's Expression, is given us the *Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God, in the Face of Jesus Christ*. And though (as he there adds) *We have this Treasure in earthen Vessels; in Bodies subject to many Weaknesses and Infirmities*: Yet the genuine Effect which it ought, and undoubtedly would have upon us, if duly attended to, he * elsewhere describes. *That we all with open Face beholding, as in a Glass, the Glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same Image, from Glory to Glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

† 2 Cor. iv. 6. * 2 Cor. iii. 18.

CHAP. IX.

Of the Interests of Mankind in certain other Respects, as affected by the Fall of Adam.

IT has been our Endeavour hitherto, to point out the Particulars, in reference to which they were great *Gainers* by it. How far, on the other side, they were *Losers*, on account of any Weakness, or Depravity and Corruption derived upon their Nature from him: I shall ^{not} presume to determine: Only I observe in general, that great Numbers of them *have* often resisted much stronger, and more alluring *Temptations* than that by which he fell.

So that whatever he was able to do by his own *strength* (at least as far as appears by what he did) they have risen to, and incomparably more, by that supernatural *Grace* stipulated to be vouchsafed, by Virtue of the *Over-ballance* of our Lord's Satisfaction to the Sins of the World: His *Sufferings* being, as without Parallel, so al-

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so valuable beyond Conception; even of infinite Efficacy and Merit, by reason of the personal Union in him of the *divine Nature*.

FOR, tho' it was impossible it should any way partake in them: Nor even did it so support the *human Nature*, as to alleviate and abate their Extremity; but left it to tread the *Wine-press alone* of the Father's Wrath: Yet since what is done to, or by a *Person*, may not only be affirmed of it as such, but applied to it under the denomination of either of its *Natures*, unto which soever of them it properly belongs; since also this is the Style and Notion of *Scripture*; * where, in speaking of Men, the *Actions* and *Passions* properly belonging to one of their *Natures*, are ordinarily ascribed to the other, as well as to the *Person* itself. And since, *Lastly*, The *Person* that suffer'd being both *God* and *Man*, we find that, agreeably to this, our Lord's *Sufferings* are † there also, by the holy Spirit, attributed to his *divine Nature*; there can need nothing farther to evidence an

* *Exod.* i. 5. *Lev.* v. 2. *Isa.* xlix. 26. *Gal.* ii. 16. &c.

† *Acts* xx. 28. 1 *John* iii. 16. 1 *Cor.* ii. 8.

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overflowing, and inexhaustible *Virtue* in them.

As to that other respect in which they are considered as Sufferers, by God's *curfing* the Ground for *Adam's Sin*; It has been generally lamented, in that, whereas before, it abundantly supply'd whatever was requisite for his Necessity or Delight; the Glory and Beauty of it being thenceforward defaced, Thorns and Thistles were its spontaneous Crop; but it was to be forced to yield its *useful* Increase, which entail'd upon him a toilsome laborious Life, dooming him to eat his *Bread* in that *Sweat* by which it was gotten.

THIS it must be own'd, was a Denunciation which appear'd with an Air of great Severity, and as a heavy Punishment upon his Posterity. But if we look nearer, it will be found in reality, a great *Blessing*.

FOR if a Man has not Strength and Greatness of Spirit to employ his Leisure wisely and virtuously, and so to govern the Bounty and Splendour of Fortune, as to suck out only the Sweats of them; a Life of necessary Labour and Industry, is undoubtedly

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undoubtedly the safest and most proper State; since his *Powers* being thereby engaged and held down to a constant Ply, he will be happily plac'd out of the Road of numberless *Temptations*: The pamper'd Indolence of overflowing Circumstances tending naturally to open many vicious extravagant Appetites and Desires, in their Nature, as fickle and various as unbounded, which would otherwise have been so kept smother'd, as neither to be Matter of Guilt to himself; nor of Mischief and Scandal to the World.

THE Mind of Man is of such restless Activity, that if Wisdom and Virtue give it not a right Turn, and care be not taken to keep it so employ'd, it will be sure to set it self on Work, joyning in with the Insinuations of Satan; and as Riches (no less than Power) furnish Means and Opportunities, so also Temptations to evil, by Reason of that listless Idleness which too commonly attends them.

So that that Wealth and *Distinction*, which dazle the Eyes of Mankind, and are universally desired and pursued with the keenest Ambition, prove in Reality the most destructive finishing Plagues and Judgments

to such, (who I doubt are too too many) whom they either blow up with *Pride*, or lull into a thoughtless carnal *Security*; and in both Respects point them out ways to burthen their Account with very many Items of *Guilt*, which, if in *Mercy*, cramped by a necessitous Fortune, they had happily escaped.

ANOTHER very valuable Advantage from this *Curse*, which doomed Mankind to *Labour* and Industry is, that, as it preserves the bodily *Powers* vegete and active; so it refines and raises those of the *Mind*; forcing the more prompt, mercurial Spirits upon polite and beneficial *Studies*; the Invention of *Arts*, and searching into the Causes, Natures, and Dependencies of Things; whereby many surprizing *Discoveries* are wrought out, highly useful to the World, and for the Delight and Ornament of humane Life: And which the *State* of *Innocence* would probably have known nothing of; since Endeavours are apt to stagnate when not inspirited by hopes of Reward.

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To this may be added lastly; that the *necessitous* State of Mankind occasioning many Wants, and consequently mutual Dependencies, drives Men of Course, to unite in *Societies* and cement Friendships; creating a mutual Tenderness, with a Sense, and Abhorrence of *Oppression* and all *Injustice*; and instilling universally a *benevolent* Disposition. All which being the natural Ties of *Discipline* and good Order, it is a *State* which may justly be consider'd, as inuring them to such *social Virtues*, as are not only of great Advantage to the World, but very acceptable to God, and preparatory to their future Happiness; the Practice of which would not have been necessary enforced in a State of independent *Sufficiency* and spontaneous *Affluence*.

So that upon the whole, that *Curse*, in the natural and necessary Consequences of it, may more properly be esteemed the result of the Divine *Mercy* than *Justice*, considering the Circumstances of Mankind,

AND the same it is evident, may be said as to the *Mortality*, they by this means also

became subject to ; nothing being more obvious than to conceive, that it was necessary *Sin* and *Death* should have come into the *World* together, and that were Men now *immortal*, it would be but a very indifferent Place ; since we have such Tragical Experience, that *Capital* Punishments are the only Means that can be used, and those scarce effectual, for preventing infinite Confusion and Mischiefs in it.

NOR indeed is it credible, that the very *Tree of Life* it self, would be an infallible and universal Preservative of *Immortality*, without a constant Series of miraculous Interpositions, as the *present State* of the *World* is. For since its *Virtue*, we may presume, extended only to a *Relief* against the ordinary decays of Nature, not the Impressions of outward *Violence*, those Quarrels and Duellings which we see now so frequent, as well as Battles and Massacres, the more tragical Effects of Ambition and Cruelty, would cause equal Ravage and Devastation, and open as wide and quick a Passage to the other *World*.

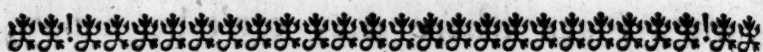
AND after all, *Death* must be consider'd as a great and very desirable Advantage to
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good Men in particular, as a Means of *escape* from a Place where they can't be happy, mix'd as they are, and liable to Annoyances from their Society with the Evil: An Escape, I say, thro' the Gates of the Grave, into an endless State of exquisite Felicity, secure, and without alloy.

NOR can it be doubted, how valuable an *Happiness* it is to those who languish under Oppression, or any Kind of Distress, that they are capable of taking Sanctuary in the Grave, *where the Wicked cease from troubling, and the Weary are at rest; where the Prisoners rest together, and hear not the Voice of the Oppressor.* So that all Things consider'd, an *Immortal Life* here, could be of Advantage to but a very few; the mighty *Nimrods* of the Earth, whose Tyrannous Insolence arm'd with Sovereignty, rides over, and tramples upon all about them: But would be an inexpressible Misery to the Bulk, in the *present State* of the World.



C H A P. X.

Of the Force of our Saviour's Example, for rectifying the moral Errors, reforming the Vices, and thereby advancing the Happiness of Mankind.

IT having been observ'd above, that the second Respect, in which our Lord's *Stipulation* made immediately upon the *Fall*, and the *Promise* publish'd pursuant to it, were an invaluable *Advantage* to them, consisted, in that they were thereby made capable of attaining far greater *Happiness* than they would have been, had our first *Parents* continued innocent ; It having been shewn also, that the proper *Happiness* of Man, as a rational Agent, must consist in *knowing* and *cleaving* to God, and endeavouring an *Imitation* of him, and that the more he does so, it must be the greater ; and lastly, we have

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ing set forth likewise, the direct and forcible Influence of the glorious *Manifestations* of the Divine *Attributes*, made by means of what our Lord did and suffer'd in the Flesh, for the conferring on him that inestimable *Benefit*; it yet remains, that I address myself to shew what farther Advances were made towards that blessed End, by the *Example* our Lord has left us, as inspiring a noble Ambition of rising into a *Resemblance* of God in Holiness and Purity of Life; so as to sanctify the *Knowledge*, and crown the *Happiness* resulting from those other glorious *Manifestations* of his Nature already consider'd.

HIS most admirable, and truly Divine *Doctrine* might have been otherwise communicated with equal Authority, as the Precepts of the *Law* were to the *chosen People*. But the inestimable Benefit accruing from his *Example*, was what, it will probably appear, could not have been gain'd any other Way; as also that, as set forth in his *Person*, it was the most effectual Means, for *rectifying* the moral Errors, and *reforming* the Behaviour of *Mankind*.

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FOR there were very many *Vices*, they were almost generally tainted with, which were the Causes of infinite Confusion, and Mischiefs in the World; and yet the *Remedies* against so diffusive an Evil, had little or no Effect: For in a way that is rugged and difficult, it is not enough to bid Men go on; but he that commands must go before, and make a *Track*. Nay considering how readily Men follow the *Vices* of those whose *Virtues* they will not imitate: And the Failures of great and wise Men too certainly and fatally infect, where their excellent Qualities are not regarded; it is no Wonder the glorious Things, the *Philosophers* writ in Commendation of *Virtue*, whilst themselves lived loosely, tended rather to corrupt.

THE least that can be said is; that if for Instance, there are lofty Strains in *Tully* about *Steadiness* and Magnanimity, in Times of Danger, and he himself, soon after, shews a mean and *abject* Spirit, it is apt to make even, *his Eloquence* seem dry and tasteless.

OR, if *Seneca* flashes surprizingly with pointed Smartness, and force of Argument,

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about *contempt* of the World, when he lives, at the same Time, in Royal State, overflows with *Wealth*, and is indefatigably grasping and heaping more; a Man of Sense would be tempted to despise *him* rather than the *Riches* and *Grandeur* he decrys: Or even suspect him of Design to draw others into Neglect, that he himself might more easily engross.

NOTHING is more evident, than that *Rules* and *Precepts* are but insipid lifeless Things, unless quickened and invigorated by *Examples*. The Publication of the *Law* to the chosen People, was enforced by the most dreadful Impressions of awful *Authority*, and yet their Behaviour soon shewed the Insufficiency of bare *Precepts*, for a steady Regulation of Practice.

LAWs it must be owned, lay an Obligation; but *Examples* have Life and Force, giving Duty its true Point of View, as not barely practicable; but easy and familiar: In a Word, those direct, but these also encline; those instruct the Judgment, but these move and proselyte the Affections; as a sensible and very encouraging Evidence, that those Things which for their Excellence

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are the Objects of our Admiration, may, for their being practicable, be so likewise of our Endeavour.

AN excellent *Good*, barely proposed, may indeed be sufficient to create intense *Desires*: But the pointing out, (which *Example* does) the certain Means of obtaining it, adds *Hope* to those *Desires*, and inspires *Resolution*.

AND therefore *Arrian*, I conceive, comes much nearer the *Point*, when setting forth the Character of a Person qualify'd to reform the World; whom he styles the *Apostle* or *Embassador* of Heaven, the *Orator* of God to Mankind; tells us, he should be without *House* or settled *Habitation*; and generally speaking, all other worldly *Accommodations*: That he should be armed with such invincible *Patience*, under extreme *Sufferings*, as if he were insensible: And, upon the whole, be a *Spectacle* of *Destitution* and *Misery* to the Eyes of the World.

THIS noble *Philosopher* wanted no other Guidance than that of good *Sense*, to draw the Description of a Person so very nearly resembling the *Circumstances* of our *Blessed Lord*, whom God actually appointed to

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that great Office; the being not only a *Preacher of Righteousness*, but the noblest and most illustrious *Example* of Virtue that ever was, or can be propounded to the World: In whom all Grace, and Goodness shone forth in their brightest Glory and Perfection, throughout the Course of his *Ministry* here on Earth; that the Interests of *Virtue* and *Piety* might, in the most effectual Way possible, be consulted and provided for, by his thus coming into the World to give such a glorious and every way unparallel'd *Example* of them: And that in a manner most admirably suited, as to answer the Necessities of Mankind, so to be an absolutely, perfect and unerring *Direction*; since we can no way be more certainly informed, how God would have us live, than by observing how he himself lived, when he was pleased to assume our Nature: And in particular it may be considered,

First, THAT *Pride* is what occasioned the Fall, not of the *Rebel-Angels* only, but of our *First Parents*: Avise the most hateful to God of all others, and most absolutely incapacitating for the Emanations of

his Mercy and Goodness; and yet what Mankind are most generally tainted with: Those Accomplishments and Excellencies of their *rational* Nature, which tend to secure them from any other Sin, proving, of course, (as was probably the Case of those apostate *Spirits*) a Temptation to this.

It may seem indeed as surprizing as lamentable, to consider that the very *Perfection* of a Creature, should be so liable to become the Occasion of its *Ruin*. But it shews how Necessary, and of what Advantage it must have been to them, that the most signal *Example* should be given of *Humility*, and what they would naturally strain to the *Imitation* of, with the keenest Endeavour.

AND it is impossible a more amazing Instance should have been given of it, unless a *Person* of more eminent Dignity than our blessed *Lord*, could have visited the World, and so *humbled* himself in it: Nor is it possible any *Example* could more forcibly recommend itself to our *Imitation*, unless a *Person* could have appeared in our *Flesh* more deserving our Admiration; or who could have endeared himself to us by
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greater Benefits. With such infinite Reason was it, that he singles out this particular *Virtue* in which * he proposes himself a *Pattern* to us.

AGAIN, *Secondly*, As to *Contempt of the World*, no one can doubt how highly Advantageous it must be, for the Reformation of Mankind, that a great and ever memorable *Example* should have been given of it: Since, as we are surrounded with Objects, and prest with Inclinations of Sense; so an over-eager and passionate Fondness for the Things here below, which minister Temptations to it, may justly be esteemed the fatal Rock which bars the Haven of eternal Happiness, and has wreckt many Millions of Souls, which otherwise might have prosperously entered.

Now it is impossible any *Example* of this kind could have been given, in its own Nature, tending to make a deeper Impression than that of our blessed Lord, unless it could have been more perfectly *voluntary* and of Choice in any, as having the Things he contemned, more absolutely in his Power; or unless it were possible any Person's

* *Matth.* xi. 29.

Example could be of greater *Authority*, as capable of putting a juster Value on what he so despised.

It is certain, nothing could be a more stinging Affront, than what God thought fit, in this amazing Instance, to put upon all the splendor of Fortune; the magnificence of Buildings, Furniture, Equipage, and other Gayeties, which so dazle the Eyes of worldly Men: It being not conceivable, that had there been impressed on these, the distinguishing Characters of Honour and Merit; or had they been certain Marks of the divine Favour, the only begotten of the Father, the Lord of Glory, would, of choice, have been born and lived under the Want of them. Nay, had they any Thing of real Value in themselves, was not he best qualify'd of any, to distinguish and make an Estimate of it?

SINCE then the deserted Circumstances of his *Birth* and Course of *Life*, (in reality more destitute, as he himself observes, than those of the Fowls and wild Beasts,) corresponded so exactly with his astonishing Humility, in taking *Humane Nature* upon him

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him; In which he enjoy'd none of the good Things, and suffer'd all the Evils incident to it: What a Rebuke is this Circumstance to the Pride, and affected Delicacy of Mankind?

SHOULD it not shame them into a Contempt of such Glitterings, the Riches and Bravery of the World? When he refused so much as to have them in his *Possession*, should they suffer them to possess their *Hearts*? When he was dead to all the Relishes of corporeal Life, should they live entirely to Sense? Since, especially, God in the Method his Providence has observed, in this great *Transaction*, has given us a most pregnant Evidence how little Value he sets on these Things? Nay, had they been such, about which our Self-denial were not to be exercised; is it possible to imagine our *Saviour's Life* (every Period of which was so highly exemplary and instructive) would have yielded us so lively a *Pattern* of it?

BUT, *Thirdly*, As to *Meekness* and *Patience*, it is but too evident, that Men have generally such an overweening Opinion of their

their own *Merit*, as makes them look for, not only kind Usage, but Respect, and even Services from those about them; on which Account, we observe them in an Heat, and fretting whenever disappointed. They are apt to be enflamed by Neglects, and stung by every Provocation: And they not only feel these Disorders upon any *Affronts*, or ill Treatment from others; but too often lose their Temper, by Repining and Frowardness, under every disastrous Circumstance that befalls them from the Hand of God; fluttering in the Net of *Affliction*, which ruffles and hampers them the more.

AND this being a Frame of Spirit which lays them open to the most dangerous destructive *Temptations*, and withholds the strengthening Influences of divine Grace; it seemed absolutely necessary, that they should have had set before them, the highest and most influential *Example* possible of *Patience* and *Meekness*, which might trace them out the Way to *Happiness*, through the most distasteful Circumstances incident to human Life.

AND such was that of our *blessed Lord*, who preserved a steady poise, and equality of
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Mind, as invincible as the Malice of his Enemies; not only enduring without Commotion, the perversetest *Contradiction of Sinners against himself*; the Scoffs, Reproaches, and Contempts of the vilest of Men, throughout the Course of his painful *Ministry*: But towards the Period of it, tho' *no Sorrow was like unto his Sorrow, with which God, afflicted him, in the Day of his fierce Anger*; Even when he was buffeted, scourged, crowned with *Thorns*, and nailed to the *Cross*, he opened not his Mouth: He did not strive nor cry, neither was his *Voice heard in the Streets*, unless in breathing out fervent Prayers for his Murderers, and imploring Mercy for them, even when under the very anguish of his Sufferings; as more ready, if possible, to forgive than they to injure him.

HE encountered the Agonies of that shameful and accursed Death, not with an Air of *stoical Roughness*, or Contempt, but a true *Patience*: In that, as he was endow'd with those robust *athletick Virtues* of Courage, Wisdom, Constancy and Resolution; so he felt the softer *Passions*: And the Com-
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plexion of his *Faculties* being so delicate, as we may well conceive, like a good Instrument nicely tuned, he answered the slightest *Touches*, having an exquisite Perception of every Object; which made him drink yet more deeply of that *bitter Cup*, by a lively and most affecting Sense of Pain.

Now since Affronts, and ill Treatment, draw their Aggravation from the *Quality* and *Innocence* of the Person suffering, no one could possibly have Right to look with higher Indignation, upon the Provocations and Injuries he received: So that no greater and more eminent *Example* of *Patience* and *Meekness*, could possibly be set forth to Mankind; unless a Person of superior Dignity, and more perfect *Innocence*, could take our *Nature* upon him, and be subjected to extremest Sufferings in it: Nor could any *Example* possibly be more influential, and more forceably recommend itself (unless we are utterly lost to all that is ingenuous, tender, and considerate in human Nature) since the *Sufferings* by which it was illustrated, were undergone, not for his *own*, but for our *Guilt*.

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AND this Circumstance minds me to consider, that if we reflect farther on the amazing *Power* which seconded his Ministry, the Allurement of his *Example* will appear yet more vigorously enforced, as receiving a distinguishing Beauty and Lustre from it : In that he shewed forth, as all the *Tenderness* and *Meekness* of the *Humane* Nature, so all the *Authority* of the *Divine*.

For, tho' it was such, as, not only the *Winds and Sea obeyed*, but reached the very inmost Recesses of the Kingdom of *Darkness*, and forced an immediate, tho' fullen and much regretted Compliance from *Apostate Spirits* ; yet it was tempered with so much *Clemency*, that those only were the *Subjects* that trembled under it.

HE did not terrify the World by *Earthquakes*, or removing *Mountains*, by speaking the *Sun into Darkness*, or the *Moon into Blood* : Much less by inflicting *National Plagues* and *Judgments*, like *Moses* on the Land of *Egypt*, or calling down *Fire from Heaven*, as *Elias* did. Such *Powers*, no doubt, would as effectually have evidenced

his divine *Mission*; but might withal have injected a superstitious Dread of that *Institution*, whose Author had given so terrible a Hansel of his Omnipotence.

ON the contrary therefore, that the *Religion* he taught might be as Amiable and Endearing in the *Motives* of its *Credibility*, as it was in its *Precepts*, when known, and practised; the *Miracles* wrought by him, were not more the Evidences of his *Power*, than Goodness.

HÉ, at once, astonished and charmed his Hearers, by his thus exerting himself in a Way of zealous and extensive *Beneficence*, going about *doing good* without distinction or reserve. This was the noble and generous *Design*, he pursued with an invincible Chearfulness and Serenity of Mind, an undaunted Resolution under the greatest Discouragements, and with unwearied Industry and Vigour; breaking the Dominion of *Satan*, and rescuing both the *deluded* and *possessed* by evil Spirits; and * *healing every Sickness, and every Disease among the People*.

* *Mat. ix. 35.*

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THE most inveterate *Maladies* could not hold their *Prescription*, but fled instantly from under his *Hands*; and others * acknowledged the very *distant* Power of his Command: Nay, the ever-flowing Fountain of healing Vertue within him streamed forth, even † *without* his Concurrence, to crown the *Faith* of the Diseased. And what is yet more, he forced the Enclosures of the *Grave*, which could not detain its Prisoners when called out by him.

NOW, since his *Miraculous Powers* all concenter'd to distinguish him, as the Model of all other *Perfection*, to a most renowned and unparallel'd *Benefactor*, it must tend, of Course, to bind Men down to the most devoted and zealous *Observance* of him, by the Cords of irresistible *Love*. Their reverential Gratitude must give every good Work of his (and every Work of his was good) the Force of a most engaging *Pattern*.

BUT more especially, if we consider, *Lastly*, its Recommendation from the transcendent *Excellence* of his *Doctrine*: For, as

* *John* iv. 50, 51. † *Luke* viii. 47.

he lived, so he taught as never any before: We do not find him, like the *Scribes*, insisting on those jejune, unedifying Topicks, the *Rites* and Ceremonies of the *Law*: But the most important and substantial *Duties* of *Piety* and *Vertue*, enforced by Considerations tending to purify and spiritualize our Nature, to raise and refine its Taste.

HE did not, like them, teach as an *Expounder* of the *Law*, guided by Traditions from the *Antients*; but as a *Law-giver*, in a Stile of *Authority* inherent in his own Person, and which even *Moses* never arrogated to himself; But what, as to him, was undeniably demonstrated, not only by the publick Exercise of a *divine* Power (as is above expressed) but by the *Character* under which he appeared. (*Moses*, according to the * *Apostle*, being faithful in all God's House as a *Servant*; but *Christ* as a *Son* over his own House.) So that it is no Wonder, what the *Evangelists* tell us, that the *People* were astonished at it.

AND undoubtedly it may justly be considered, as of mighty influence to enforce

* *Heb.* iii. 5, 6.

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the *Example* of a *Treacher*, so illustriously distinguished; to make it reverentially observed, and give it, as well as his *Precepts*, the Power of a Law; having these peculiar Advantages, that the infinite *Dignity* of his Person, makes the *Imitation* of him most highly honourable, and his *Authority* renders it Necessary.

I add upon the whole, in reference to this *Head*; that whereas the most eminent and best *Examples* the World has otherwise afforded us, are to be followed with Caution and Reservedness, least, in some respect or other, we be drawn into *Errors*; that of our blessed Lord was, as an Universal, so a safe *Pattern*, every way perfect, without Taint or Alloy of Infirmary.

He had *Humility* without either conceal'd *Pride*, or Meannels and Dejection of Spirit: He had *Contempt* of the World, without any precise affected Austerity; *Innocence* without Weakness; fervent *Zeal* without intemperate Passion; Steadiness and *Resolution* without peremptory Stiffness, or humourfome Self-conceit: He had *Wisdom* without Cunning; *Meekness and Patience* without

without Cowardice or Stupidity; a *Conduct* strictly *severe* without supercilious Moroseness; *Beneficence* without noisy Ostentation; *Piety* abstracted and seraphick, but never evaporating in rapturous Enthusiasm. His *Virtues* were splendid without Vanity; Heroical without any thing of Transport; and every way Extraordinary; yet well poised and regular, without Tincture of Extravagance.

Sic ille Manus, sic ora.

IN a Word, his *Example* was adorned with Excellencies most highly worthy our Imitation, and tempered with Compliances most attractively encouraging it.

Now since his whole *Life*, as well as *Doctrine*, was the directest Contradiction possible, a pointed Rebuke to the false Conceptions and vicious Practices of Mankind: And since it is certain, *Examples* are of far greater Force than *Precepts*, and no Example could be so influential, unless there could have been a *Person* of equal Dignity and Authority, appointed by the Father, to assume our Nature in order to
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that great End ; or who could have endeared himself to us by equal Benefits, and so have as justly claimed a most devoted Observance : It is evident, God has in this great *Transaction*, taken the most effectual Method in this respect also, to reform the World, and what, as far as we can conceive, could not have been taken to that Advantage any other way; so as with equal Force to address it self to every *Passion*, and actuate all the most vigorous Principles of *Duty*.



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THE CONCLUSION.

AND now upon a *Review*, the infinite *Wisdom*, as well as *Goodness* of this wonderful *Dispensation*, and the important *Reasons* that gave Birth to it, even antecedent to the *Fall* it self, shine forth and are demonstrated with regard both to *God* and *Man*.

AND, *First*, With regard to *God*: He having endowed the rational Inhabitants of Heaven and Earth, with *Faculties* capable of contemplating his Excellencies and *Perfections*, and worshipping and serving him in so worthy and acceptable a manner, as by his being highly honoured, to answer the End of their Creation: That they might, accordingly, answer it, and their *Powers*
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not lie dormant and useless as to the noblest, and most delightful *Exercise* of them, the Dignity of their Nature had made them capable of; it was necessary that the Tribute of their *Worship* and Service, presented daily before his Throne, should be offered in a Way the most perfect and excellent, it could possibly be raised to.

AND effectually to enable and excite them to this; it was farther necessary, that his infinite *Wisdom, Power, Goodness, Justice, Mercy, Love, Purity, Majesty, Holiness*, with whatever other glorious *Attribute* he has, should be made known, and demonstrated to them, in such a Manner, as to make the most lasting and influential *Impression* upon their Minds; and so strain them up to the most exalted *Thoughts* of, and seraphical *Devotion* to him, which was to be done, not by Force of the *Ideas* he had stamp't upon their Nature, or even by leaving it upon their *Faith*, to believe his *Declarations* of himself; but by sensible and most surprizing *Convictions* from his *Works*.

AND this, how effectually it has been accomplished in this wonderful *Dispensation*, we have endeavoured to make appear,

in his *permitting* Man to fall into Sin, and then executing such an amazing *Scheme* for his *Redemption*, as to shew forth, to their View, the *Glories* of his *Nature* in the Manner we have here described.

AGAIN, *Secondly*, with regard to *Man-kind*; God having made them *free Agents*, (leaving, consequently, the *Issues* of their endless *Happiness* or *Misery* to their own *Conduct*) and of such a *Compound Nature*, and in such hazardous *Circumstances*, as put them under a *Necessity* of restless *Vigilance*, and perpetual *Contests*; and struggling to guard their *Innocence*: They would generally have been plunged into remediless *Misery*, had his *Justice* made a peremptory *Challenge*, and so concluded each upon his *first Transgression*; whereby the *important Design* of their *Creation*, his being *honoured* and *Glorified* by their *Service*, and their attaining, consequently, to *Happiness*, would have been almost entirely defeated. Wherefore it was the Natural (I had almost said *Necessary*) *Determination* of his infinite *Wisdom*, as well as *Goodness*, *Mercy* and *Love*.

First, To accept and substitute such a precious and costly *Sacrifice*, as might be a full,

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full, compleat and standing *Satisfaction* (from the earliest Off-spring of the Infant World, to the descending Succession of its latest Periods) in behalf of all *Sinners* within the *Conditions* of that *Acceptance*; whereby being screened from *Justice*, they might be indulged, the inestimable Privilege of *Repentance*, and Opportunities of *After-wisdom*; so as upon their Experience of the Issues of *Good* and *Evil*, and the *rational Convictions* consequent upon it, to be influenced into a *Subjection* and Obedience, deliberate and truly *Voluntary*, and so both more *honourable* to their Almighty Sovereign, and more becoming the *Dignity* of their own Nature.

AND then, *Secondly*, To guard that Indulgence of *Repentance* with such *dreadful Severity*, that instead of animating to *Presumption* in Sin, it creates naturally such shocking Horror, as drives Men, with trembling, to take Sanctuary in the Arms of that *Mercy*, purchased by Means of it.

FOR in that his *Justice* could be appeased by no less valuable *Sacrifice*, than that of his own Eternal Son; he has expressed the most formidable *Hatred*, and wrathful *Indignation*

tion against Sinners, that he could possibly do: Such as loudly proclaims un-remitting *Vengeance* upon whomsoever not interested in that great *Atonement*.

WITH such admirable *Wisdom* has he adjusted this glorious *Manifestation* of himself, that his *Mercy*, *Goodness* and *Love*, instead of eclipsing, highly illustrate the awful Idea of his *Justice Purity* and *Holiness*.

FOR as to all others who by *Repentance* and *Reformation*, are entitled to the inestimable *Benefit of Remission of Sins*; they are also by this Means, most powerfully influenced, after lapsing into it, to rise with more steady and vigorous *Resolutions*, enforced by the Dread of the Evil of it: And so gradually to form and refine themselves into an *habitual Relish* of *Virtue* and *Piety*; *working out their Salvation*, not barely *with Fear and Trembling*, but such a filial *Love*, as advances them, at length, into a Capacity of *worshiping* and serving him in such an acceptable Way, as by his being greatly *honoured*, to promote, in Proportion, their own *Happiness*.

AND

AND it is this, after all, which is to be consider'd as the chief and *ultimate End* pointed at in this great *Transaction*: For the universal Tribute of Adoration and Thanksgiving, which ascends daily before his Throne, in the united Praises and Acclamations of his Creatures, does not any Way profit, or make Addition to him; yet it is highly pleasing and acceptable before him, because, by (expressing their grateful Sense of former Vouchsafements) it naturally qualifies them for farther Emanations of his *Bounty* and *Goodness*.

As the *Fullness* essential to the Divine Nature, is too secure to suffer *Diminution*; so it admits not from Eternity any possibility of *Encrease*; rais'd far above the Reach, either of Kindness and Benefit from the Good, or Damage from the Malice and Blasphemies of the Wicked; He has a Source of infinite *Happiness*, solely from the lovely Ideas of his own *Perfections*.

So that whatever *Honour* has, since the Creation redounded to him, from the most devoted *Piety*; the most exalted acceptable

ceptable *Worship* here below, or the joint tuneful Hallelujahs of the *Heavenly Host*, can be no otherwise regarded in his Sight, than as gradually preparing them for their more clear and extensive *Perceptions* of him; and his nearer, and more familiar *Communications* of himself, in which the most exquisite *Felicity* consists, that *Creatures* can aspire too.

THE higher Degrees of *Perfection* they attain, he is the more Honoured, and therefore acceptably; because their *Happiness* is advanced by it: In that they are animated by the utmost possible *Imitation* of him, to imprint gradually on their own *Natures*, those transcendent *Excellencies* which they admire and adore in *His*.

AND we may here observe, by the Way, that what has been noted in Reference to this, guides us naturally to account for the Reason of his Vouchsafement in using the Ministry of *Angels*, as *Instruments* of his Providence in this lower World.

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FOR though his Power of *Acting* is such, that he can immediately by himself, and in a Moment, effect whatever pleaseth him in Heaven and Earth, and steer all *Affairs*, and Transactions in both, solely by an *Act* of his own *Will*. Yet he condescends to Honour that highest Order of his Creatures with his *Commands*, and in their respective Degrees and Capacities accepts their *Service*, not for his own *Ease*, but the increase of their *Happiness*: In that they are thereby made farther capable of his *Favour*; as also of contemplating, at a nearer View, the glorious *Dispensations* of his Wisdom and Goodness.

BUT to return, and conclude this Point; since he has enabled the *rational* Creation in Heaven and Earth, by *Manifestations* of his most adorable *Attributes*, in the Manner specified above, to raise themselves to far higher, and more extensive Degrees of *Knowledge*, and consequently a more fervent *Love* of, and seraphical *Devotion* to him: And thereby to the Acquisition of far greater *Happiness*, than they could otherwise have attained: It

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is very plain, that it was his amazing *Love* and *Goodness* to which his infinite *Wisdom* has been so surprizingly subser-
vient in projecting the Plan of this won-
derful *Dispensation*.

So that as the most glorious *Ideas*, the
highest Strains of *Admiration* we can reach;
and the most exalted *Praises* the stunted
creeping Capacities of Mortality can rise
to, fall incomparably short of what is due
to his infinite Excellencies and *Perfections*;
so the most humble and thankful *Acknow-
ledgements* we can possibly make, are but low
wretched Compositions, for those immense
Sums, in which we stand indebted, for his
transcendent *Mercy* and *Goodness*, and All-
mighty *Love* manifested in this great My-
stery of our *Redemption*.

AND, upon the whole, it is, I conceive,
demonstratively evident, that should we
suppose, what has been asserted by some
(but neither has, nor ever can be prov'd)
that Sinners might have been received to
Mercy, and *Pardon'd* freely, or at least upon
other Terms: Yet as we see the Scheme spe-
cified above, has been actually pursued; so

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it appears every way worthy of God, the result of infinite *Wisdom* and *Goodness*; and such an amazing *Manifestation* of every other the most resplendent and adorable *Attribute* of the divine Nature, as infinitely to aggrandize the Idea of his *Sovereignty*, and set forth, and magnify his *Glory* to the view of the whole *rational Creation* in such a manner, as could not have been done to that Advantage any other way.

BUT more particularly with regard to the inestimable *Benefit* to Mankind arising from it, it may here certainly much rather be demanded, than once of the Children of *Israel*, by the * Prophet: *What could God have done more for his Vineyard, that he has not done in it?* which makes it the more exceedingly surprizing, that it should so generally have brought forth *wild Grapes*: And more especially,

First, THAT a very great Part of the Christian World should have been most deplorably corrupted by a Generation of Men, so abandoned of all Grace and Goodness, such abject Wretches as to prostitute this most stupendously holy, and venerable

* *Isa. v. 4.*

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Institution to secular Ends: Nay, so entirely bereft even of common *Modesty*, as to form and impose new Schemes of *Doctrine*, and even Articles of *Faith*, suited to low sordid Projects for blinding and fleecing the Laity of their Communion, thereby to raise Wealth and Honour to themselves.

WHEN we reflect on the transcendent Excellence, and important *Issues* of this most glorious *Dispensation*, it seems shocking and monstrous, that any sort of Men baptized into the *Faith* and *Covenants* of it, of how invincible a Forehead soever, should be harden'd up into such staring Prophanations: Considering especially that dreadful Anathema * *St. Paul* has denounced against all such, who dare advance and impose any *Article* of *Belief* or *Practice*, as Necessary to Salvation, not originally taught by him. (Which is demonstratively the plain import of the *Text*) Where the *Holy Spirit*, by putting the Case as high as possible, pronouncing that *Apostle*, or even *Angel*, Accursed, who should ever presume upon any such *Attempt*, has in mercy to the *Church*, guarded

* *Gal. i. 8, 9.* Explained by *Acts xv.*

its Lines (as might well be thought) with an impregnable Fortrefs, against those insolent Pretences to *Infallibility*, which he fore-saw would be set up to countenance it.

AND it is yet more deplorable, that this *Mystery of Iniquity*, having nested itself under the Wings of secular Sovereignty, and so been working, for several Ages, with an high Hand, has not only diffused its Poyson through a vast Extent in the *Christian World*, but been the fatal Occasion, by flagrant *Scandal*, of hardening *Jews* and *Mahometans*, in their Oppposition to the *Faith*, and even encouraging *Heathens* in *Idolatry*, and thereby of checking the Progress of the *Gospel*, and blaspheming the holy Name by which we are called.

So that, whereas it appears from what has been said, how effectually that first Attempt of *Satan* upon our *First Parents* was, by the infinite *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of God, turned exceedingly to his own *Glory* and the *Advantage* of Mankind; these Men may very justly be said to have too successfully joyned in with his malicious Subtilty in the only *After-game* he has now left him, the
evacuating,

evacuating, as much as possible, the blessed Influence of this most glorious Dispensation. Since therefore they are *Instruments* so faithfully and successfully industrious in his Service, it is but meet they should finally receive their *Wages* from him. But as these adulterate the *Faith* by spurious and unwarrantable *Additions*, so it is farther surprising,

Secondly, AND equally to be lamented, that there should be others, on the contrary, who with zealous *Sophistry*, by expounding away the natural, obvious Sense of *Scripture*, attempt our *Saviour's Divinity*, and with it, consequently, his *Satisfaction*; and so to evacuate, at once, all that is *Federal* in the *Christian Religion*, and sap the very Foundations of it: That when it is so very evident, that the true use of *Reason* in *Believing*, with regard to *Divine Truths*, consists not in examining the natural *Credibility* of the *Object*, but the *Certainty* of the *Revelation*: (Which when once satisfy'd of, we have no more to do but readily believe.) That, I say, this being so very evident, there should be any, on the other side, who conclude that nothing is revealed which

which they cannot *Comprehend*; and that therefore no *Scripture* is to be interpreted to such a *Sense*. Since thereby they must make their own *Reason* the *Rule* of their *Faith*, and even the *Measure of Truth* too: Because, otherwise, a Thing's being *Incomprehensible* can be no concluding *Argument* for its not being *True*; or consequently, against their *Belief* of it. They must, I say, in Effect assert, that there is nothing in the whole *Latitude of Science*, Natural or Divine, no intelligible *Object*, that their *Faculties* are incommensurate to: Which is a *Blasphemous Arrogance* infinitely dangerous for any *Mortal* to entertain a *Thought* of; since he who thus makes himself a *God* in this *World*, will, undoubtedly be a *Devil* in the *Next*.

But such dogmatical Determinations, with reference to divine *Mysteries*, are the more surprizingly unaccountable, and even ridiculous, when these aspiring *Reasoners* find themselves every *Day* gravelled with inextricable *Difficulties* in the search of *Nature*, of which they have *Adequate Ideas*: And particularly with regard to *Extension*, *Figure*, and *Motion*, (to admit
other

other Instances) Propositions are wrought out, which baffle Thought, and dazle the Understanding with seeming Inconsistencies.

AND since God may be thought, in Mercy, to have ordered this, to humble and mortify the Mind of Man, for the more submissive reception of *Divine Truths*; it is, I say, the more surprizing, and to be lamented; that these Men, unreclaimed by such All-wise providential Discipline, should assume to themselves, even to determine positively concerning the very *Nature of God*, when thus notoriously and confessedly unable to comprehend his *Works*; that they should take upon them to deny the possible Existence of *Three distinct Persons* in the Unity of the *divine Essence*, because they cannot adjust and clear it up to their own Reason: As tho' the Principles of Individuation in the *divine Nature*, were the proper adequate Object of Human Speculation.

BUT it is, of all, most astonishing, that they should lay such Weight upon this Conclusion, groundless as it is, as to attempt its Support at no less Expence, than the degrading our Saviour into a Creature, and disowning

disowning his *Satisfaction*, as uselels and even *inconsistent*. An *innocent* Person's skreening and indemnifying the *Guilty* by his *Sufferings*, is what they cannot relish : And it is unjust, they say, in the nature of the Thing, to punish one for the Sins of another : Though they allow a Man may be justly *bound*, by his own voluntary Act, to pay another's *Debt* ; and thereby bring upon himself, Hunger and Nakedness, which are bodily *Pains*, and equally *Punishments* with *Scourging* and *Crucifixion*. Besides, they cannot apprehend, there is any Necessity that God should make good his *Threatnings*, or enforce the *Sanctions* of his *Laws* : But that he may pardon freely without any *Sacrifice* offered to his *Justice* ; contrary, as we observed above, to the natural Sense and Notion of Mankind.

ALL that I shall add, with reference to these Gentlemen, is to beseech them in the Fear of God, to consider calmly and seriously ; Are they content to stake their everlasting Interest upon this *Affertion* ? since they may assure themselves, that in Case, after all, that infinite unerring *Wisdom*, which mov'd him to enact *Laws*, should steadily and

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inexorably Abett his *Justice* in punishing Transgressors; it will be a dreadful Disappointment for them, to find that *Saviour* necessary, whom they thus daringly renounce, to second the *Sallies* of their overcurious and rashly venturous *Reason*.

BUT, *Thirdly*, It is, above all, amazing to consider, that, tho' God in this wonderful *Dispensation*, hath so set forth himself, both by his *Word* and his *Works*, as to act with the utmost possible Force upon all the Powers of *rational* Nature; there should yet be any so unhappily deluded by the Wiles of *Satan*, as to be blind, to the infinite *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, and other transcendent Excellencies and Perfections, shining forth in it: That there should be any, who shunning this Meridian Light of *revealed Truth*, make it their Choice to grope in the Darkness and Obscurity of *Natural Religion*. Since, tho', by the infinite Mercy of God in *Christ*, it guides those to Happiness, who, destitute of all farther Means of Instruction, are under a Cloud of *Invincible Ignorance*, as incapable of believing in him of whom they have not heard:

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heard: Yet to such, who trusting wholly to it, harden their *Hearts*, and stop their *Ears* against the Knowledge of *Him*, when actually tendered and laid open to them, it will prove the *Savour of Death unto Death*, and inevitably ascertain, and highly aggravate their *Condemnation*.

IN which, also he will, one Day, most undoubtedly *justify* himself at that great and general Convention of his *Creatures*, the rational *Inhabitants* of *Heaven* and *Earth*; whom he did not create with *Design* that any of them should be *Miserable*: Their *Guilt* and the *Doom* consequent upon it have been the *Result* of their own *Choice*.

IN endowing all with competent *Powers* and *Faculties*, for their *Direction*; and aiding them with sufficient *Grace* to attain *Happiness*, if not wanting to their own *Interest*, he has discharged the *Part* of a just and faithful *Creator*, and is not accountable for the *Misery* that any willfully bring upon themselves: Who therefore when (as I observed above) he shall Demand at that great Day, as once by his Prophet *Ezekiel*; *IS NOT MY WAY E-*

QUAL? Will stand silent, as self-condemn'd.

It is highly unreasonable and absurd to imagin that, as an Universal and All-mighty *Sovereign*, he should have debarr'd himself the Liberty of creating Subjects and Vassals to do him Honour and Service, and given Being to none, on account of his Foreknowledge of the irreclaimable Disobedience and willful Misery of some. Neither can he be supposed restrain'd from it by his infinite *Goodness*; which displays it self demonstratively in raising them from Non-existence, into a Capacity of being eternally *Happy*: And, as on the one side, it shines forth in the Reward of those who make a wise and industrious Use of that his inestimable *Benefit*; so on the other, it is abundantly vindicated in its primary *Intention*, that all should ratably conform themselves, so as not to come short of it.

But it triumph's above all, and in Conjunction with his infinite *Wisdom*, in that, whereas he foresaw from Eternity, that *Man* would fall into Sin, he determin'd to permit it; as for other weighty
Reasons

Reasons arising from the Nature and Complexion of the Being he designed him; so more especially (what my present Subject determines me to specify.)

1st. That he might thereby open a Way (as has been shewn above) for accepting the Repentance of Sinners, and indulging them the inestimable Benefit of Mercy and Pardon, after repeated and even habitual Provocations.

AND Secondly, because otherwise he would not have been honour'd and worship'd in so worthy and acceptable a Manner by his good and faithful Servants; nor would they have attain'd in any Degree so great an *Happiness* as the Dignity of their Nature had made them capable of: Since I conceive I have plainly shewn, that he could not have been *manifested* to them any other Way to so great *Advantage* as he has been by his taking Occasion from the Sin of Man; With an amazing Reach of *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, perfecting the Design of his Creation, even by means of his *Disobedience*.

I add upon the whole, that whereas, the excellent (a) Commentator on Epictetus, in his Disquisition concerning the Origine of Evil, has observ'd, that God doth not at all cause that Aversion from good, which is in the Soul when it Sins; but only gave such a Power to the Soul, whereby it might turn it self to Evil; (and then adds) out of which God might afterwards produce so much Good as could not otherwise have been without it: I say, in Reference to this his last Remark, I would earnestly recommend it (as of Service to such who labour under Prejudices against reveal'd Religion) to be duly consider'd, that God has actually produced the Effect the Philosopher here observes; With Regard to that first Aversion of the Soul from good in the Person of Adam, which brought Sin into the World: He having so turn'd it, by means of its beneficial Consequences, as to become most eminently subservient, both to his own Glory, and the Advantage and Happiness of Mankind. And that he has also thereby, in great Measure, superseded that puzzling

(a) Simplicius.

Question, which has perplex'd the Thoughts of the Inquisitive, in almost all Ages. Since his permitting that *Aversion* in Man from Good, or Abuse of his *natural Liberty*, which was the first Introduction, or *Origine of Evil*, is so far from casting any Shadow of *Imputation* on his most Holy and glorious *Attributes*; that on the contrary it was an *Act* every Way worthy his infinite *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, and what merits the Praises, and Thanksgivings of Mankind, as having open'd a Way, by what he brought to pass upon it, for the indemnifying them universally from the irretrievably fatal *Consequences* of the like *Aversions* or *Abuses* for the Future. And moreover, render'd them, upon our *Lord's* *Manifestation in the Flesh*, capable of rising to far greater *Happiness*, than they would probably have been, had not only *Adam*, but they themselves also continued *Innocent*.

F I N I S.

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